

The ENCHANTED CHILDREN



By VIVIAN T. POMEROY

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THE GOLDEN BIRD (page 117)

THE ENCHANTED CHILDREN

BY
VIVIAN T. POMEROY

Illustrated by
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DEDICATION

To you — Princess,
who came with me on the Adventure.

To you — Fairy Godfather,
who turned our pumpkin into a coach.

To you — Four Enchanting Children,
who gave us our first curtsey, and opened for us the
golden gate upon Brush Hill.

To you — Children of the white church of the First Parish in Mil-
ton, Massachusetts, who keep us up to the Adventure.




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Herman J. Bacharach.



THE ENCHANTED CHILDREN

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THE PRINCESS AND THE GUSSET

ONCE upon a time there was a King whose kingdom had got into a great mess because of many wars. The courtiers and councillors and people were always quarreling with those of other countries, and plunging the poor King into war before he could say, 'My sacred hat!' which is the royal exclamation instead of our commoner 'Gee whiz!' So the wars were not the King's own fault, except the rather stupid fault of weakness.

Of course, wars make everything frightfully expensive, besides spoiling the happiness of people; and the King, weak as he was, could see that something must be done. At first he issued a proclamation, saying that he and all the royal household would give up eating candy of any kind — excepting peppermints, extra strong, which, after all, are used for medicine and for sucking in church, and cannot properly be called candy. Lots of people signed the pledge promising to give up eating candy; and for a time the King felt much happier. But things became no better; and the Queen found that she could not manage on her housekeeping money, although she did the washing at home and used all the hints in 'Palace Chat,' a use-

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ful weekly magazine for industrious queens. Things became worse and worse, and at last came to a crisis.

One morning at breakfast the King threw his egg with a crash into the fireplace, and he said, 'There!' The Queen was horrified and could only gasp, 'Father! What have you done?' And it was at that moment that the King threw his weakness into the same place as the egg.

'That egg is ancient and vile,' the King said. 'I won't eat it: and, what's more, I'll take the management of this rotten kingdom into my own hands. I'll let the palace furnished, and we'll live in the gardener's lodge. It's the only empty house in the whole kingdom. And I'll get rid of all these courtiers and lords and ladies-in-waiting. They've waited long enough.'

But the Queen said: 'What about the girls?'

'Let 'em work for their living,' snapped the King.

And he went out at once and gave a week's notice of dismissal to all the lords and ladies; and at the end of the week he had let the palace furnished to a rich pickle merchant.

Now the King had three daughters. Two of them were beautiful, and the third and youngest had a bright and lovely heart. Two aunts in neighboring kingdoms each offered to take a beautiful princess. So *they* were settled, and found life much the same, although not so hungry, in adjoining kingdoms. There was not enough work for both the Queen and the youngest Princess at home in the lodge; so a nice situation had to be found for the Princess. The Queen

The Princess and the Gusset

got the 'Boston Transcript,' 'Church Chimes,' 'Film Faces,' and other papers; and she looked at all the advertisements. But you only have to look at the advertisements to know how very little there is which you can do. Some people wanted stenographers; but the Princess could not work a typewriter. Some wanted 'Good, reliable companions; fond of cats'; but the Princess could not bear any kind of cat. There was always something wrong about the advertisements. And then the right one came. It said: 'Mother's Help; young, strong, bright, willing, affectionate, good needle-woman; beauty not necessary, if regular church-goer.'

'There you are!' said the Queen. 'Write at once.'

'All right!' said the Princess, bravely. So she applied for the position, and got it.

That is how the King and Queen settled down much more comfortably in the lodge at the palace gates and became much more contented. Each Wednesday morning, mail service permitting, they received a letter from their youngest daughter. Sometimes the Queen felt a little anxious about her child, for there was, so it seemed, no end to the things which a 'mother's help' must do. There were seven children in the house where the Princess worked; and they all had to be sewn for, bathed, taken out for walks; and there were fires to be lit, beds to be made, washing and cooking to be done, and all the hundred other things which make a happy home.

It is no use pretending any longer. I may as well

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tell you that the Princess was most shamefully overworked. Her beautiful hands — they were beautiful — became chapped and red; and her eyes — she had quite nice eyes — grew dark and tired: and her hair, never other than straight, hung limply in those tails so hopeless to deal with. She would have had her hair bobbed; but her mistress said that it would have a bad influence on the children. Sometimes the Princess cried herself to sleep; but she cried quietly, because she slept with the twins, Charles and George, who would wake at any kind of noise.

But in the kingdom things began to get better. The people began to think the King a good fellow when he did so well growing vegetables in his garden. And the Queen really managed wonderfully. And a real turn in affairs came when a handsome neighboring Prince, much dreamed of by at least a score of Princesses, approached the King about buying some valuable carrots. The King had not thought before of selling his carrots; but he was quite ready to make a little extra pocket-money; so he asked the Prince to a simple supper the next Wednesday to talk things over.

On the Wednesday evening the Prince turned up, walking from the railway station with his bag, and actually bringing with him several large lumps of coal (for his kingdom had not been at war), which at once endeared him to the Queen. He praised the pictures in the parlor, painted by the Queen in her extreme girlhood; he praised the garden where a perfect forest of carrots was growing; and, just as they

The Princess and the Gusset

were about to sit down for supper, there was a bang at the front door and a rush in the hall, and in flew the youngest Princess.

I have already told you that the Princess had a radiant heart. And so it was that evening. Her face was alight with love and excitement. She explained how she had got an evening off, and had come by the trolley. She shook hands with the Prince and sat down to supper. She felt rather sorry about her red, swollen hands; and the Queen cried a little over them afterwards. Then the Princess hugged her mother, and felt lovely and warm and sheltered, and tried to forget that she had to go back to the twins.

It was after supper, while the Queen and the Princess talked in whispers and when the subject of the carrots had been successfully settled, that the Prince suddenly turned to the Queen, who was knitting a jersey.

‘I want you to help me,’ he said, his handsome face clouding. ‘I have received from my great-aunt Sophia a present of twelve embroidered — very beautifully embroidered — shirts. As you may have heard, she is a devoted aunt, and I am anxious not to give her pain. She has asked me to a banquet next week, and I know that I am expected to wear one of these gorgeous shirts. I have tried on first one and then another; and, although they fit my neck and arms, they are abominably uncomfortable — indeed, confoundedly so. There is not one of them which fails to pinch, rub, and irritate. I happen to have

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brought a couple with me in the bag with the coal. I wonder if you could detect anything wrong.'

The Prince, with a charming smile, produced from his bag two splendid shirts. Blowing a slight amount of coal dust from them, he handed them to the Queen.

The Queen most carefully examined them. 'I can see nothing wrong,' she said ruefully. 'You say they are good measurement. They must be bewitched.'

'Don't be silly, Mother,' remarked the King.

It was then the Princess asked, ever so modestly, if she might see.

'Why!' exclaimed the Princess. 'Look! They have no gussets.'

'My sacred hat!' cried the King. 'How distressing! What, pray, is a gusset?'

'A gusset,' said the Princess gravely, 'is a little three-cornered piece, let into things to make room to stretch. I know, because a mother's help has to make and mend when there are seven children — five boys and two twins.'

And the Princess offered bravely to put four gussets into the embroidered shirts of the Prince that very evening.

And the Prince? Well, he sat and gazed at the Princess as princes look at the most beautiful lady in all the world.

Of course, you guess the end already; and you are right. The Prince married the Princess, who knew a gusset when she did not see one. And they were as happy as any people I have ever heard of, before or since.



Herman I. Bacharach.



THE WINGS

THIS is the chronicle of Prince Ladly. Prince Ladly lived in an ancient castle with a moat and drawbridge, such as you read about in the best books of adventure. His father, of course, was a king; but Ladly had to do many things he did not like. He had tiresome lessons. He was requested to wash his face more often than he felt necessary; and he was sent to bed when he did not want to go.

The beginning of this chronicle was in the school vacation of Ladly. It was a day when nobody seemed to want Ladly. The Queen was out shopping; the King was busy with his papers and laws and things; and the Lord High Chamberlain was polishing the brass of the King's second-best crown.

Ladly wandered about the castle grounds; and at last he came to the kitchen garden, where the cabbages and strawberries grew. Then he heard somebody singing. It was a very nice voice; and Ladly stopped to listen. And it was a very nice song — all about sunlight and flowers and angels and other jolly things. Ladly walked round a corner of the castle wall, and then he saw who was singing. It was the castle kitchen maid. She was sitting in the sunshine by the kitchen door upon a stool; and she was peeling potatoes. The peel was dropping into a bucket for the pigs; and the white potatoes were hopping out of the

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kitchen maid's rough little hands into another bucket, where they splashed into water.

Ladly said: 'Hello!'

The kitchen maid looked up and answered: 'Hello!'

Ladly said: 'I say, are those potatoes going to be mashed for lunch?'

The kitchen maid said: 'Yes, when I've done enough.'

Ladly said: 'Here! Give me a knife. I'll help you.'

So the kitchen maid gave him a knife; and he sat on the ground at her side. But he didn't help much at first. Peeling potatoes is more difficult than you think before you try. At first you don't get curly-wurly peeling; you get chips. After a while Ladly did better. And he said to the kitchen maid: 'I say, don't you get tired of kitchening?'

She answered: 'Sometimes. But then I remember that I'm doing it for you and the others and everybody; and I hear the angels' wings.'

Ladly said: 'Go on! What angels?'

The kitchen maid said: 'Well, I call them angels. Really it's the Good God, who keeps us all alive and puts love inside us. Only, when he comes, it sounds like the rustling of wings.'

Ladly did not say anything more. He went on peeling. Soon the potatoes were all done. And the castle cook came to the back door and called out: 'Come on, there, with them pertaters'; which shows that even royal cooks do not always speak correctly.

The Wings

I cannot stay to tell you all that happened during the next ten years. I must hurry on to the time when Ladly was eighteen.

In the country of this chronicle, when you are eighteen you are twenty-one. You are really grown up. So, when Ladly came of age, his father bought him a useful little kingdom, suitable for beginners; and he made Ladly the king of it. Also he told Ladly to choose some one as wife and queen. Of course, Ladly chose the kitchen maid; and everybody was immensely pleased. For whom could you have better for a wife and queen than a kitchen maid who peeled potatoes, sang with a nice voice, and had lovely thoughts all at the same time? So Ladly married the kitchen maid.

The wedding was a beautiful one. The new castle was a dream, furnished largely with pictures painted by friends and given as presents. And it was great fun keeping castle, which is much the same as keeping house. King and Queen Ladly loved one another dearly; they had the most delicious meals; and the potatoes were always better than anything else, which shows that it is often wise to have as queen somebody who has had experience in the kitchen.

The King learned how to tune the piano himself, and he did a lot of work in the garden. The Queen was always arranging the furniture in new ways, and making new curtains, cushion covers, and other things. So they both felt very happy. They felt so happy that they forgot all about the other people.

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And perhaps this was the reason why soon sadness came.

If anybody rang the castle bell to ask the King to kill a dragon, or find some children who had been lost, Ladly would say: 'Oh! Don't bother me now. Don't you see I'm busy putting in these bulbs?' Or, if some old women came for some of the Queen's extra special ointment, the Queen would say: 'Please go away and come another time. I have no ointment now. I am so busy making new chintz covers for the drawing-room chairs.'

One day Ladly said to the Queen: 'Why don't you sing nowadays? You used to sing all day long. Don't you remember the morning when we peeled the potatoes? You were singing then. Why don't you sing now?'

The Queen answered: 'Oh! I don't know. I haven't had any lovely thoughts lately.'

The King said: 'I'm sure I haven't. And my kingdom is going to the dogs, so they say.'

Then the Queen, who had been a kitchen maid, said softly: 'Ladly, perhaps we've forgotten how to do things for all the others.'

Ladly was quiet for a long time; then he spoke. 'Look here!' he said. 'Let's forget about ourselves and the piano and chairs and things. I'll go out and hunt that dragon the people have been making such a fuss about.'

Queen Ladly said: 'Oh, yes! And I'll make some new ointment for those old dears.'

The Wings

So for the rest of the week they both were busy. The Queen made one thousand and twenty-three pots of extra special ointment; and the King killed fourteen large and dangerous dragons.

And on the Saturday night they sat together by the fire; and there was no other light in the room.

Ladly said: 'I say, haven't we had a jolly week?'

The Queen said: 'Yes. And isn't it queer how we love each other more because of doing things for others?'

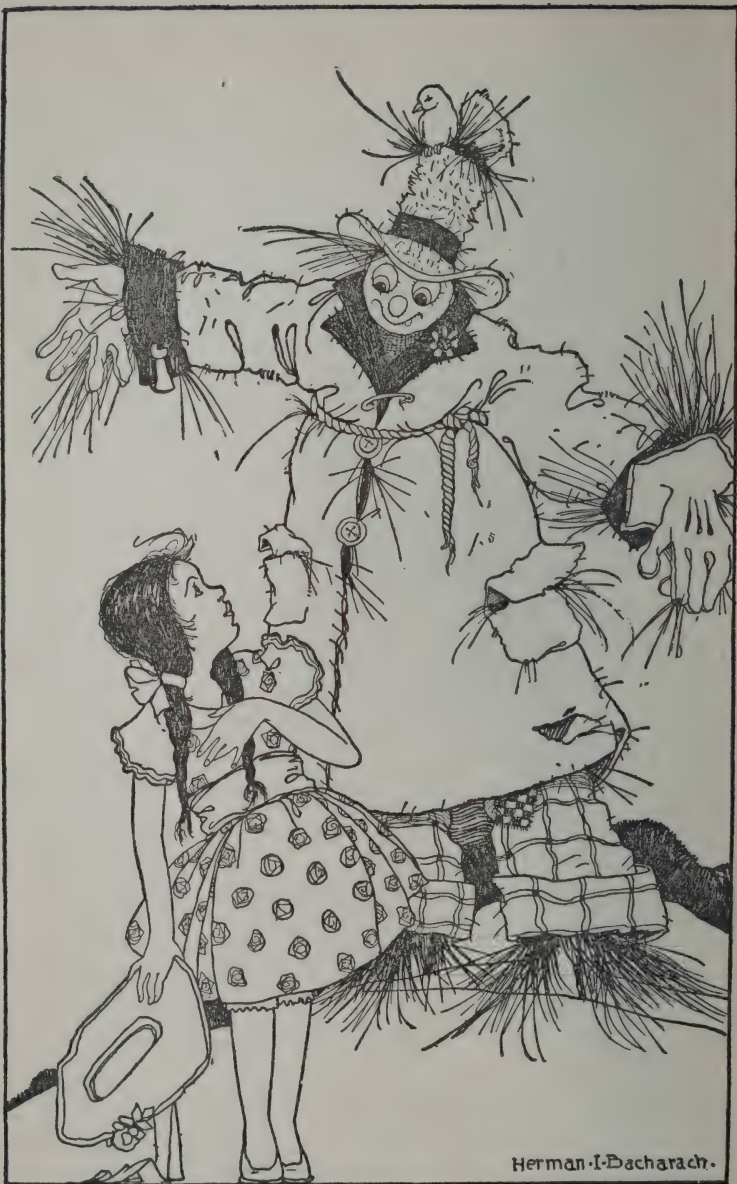
Ladly said: 'You are wonderful. You always say just what I'm thinking.'

He smiled, and the Queen began to sing.

Suddenly she stopped.

She whispered: 'Listen!'

And out in the dark corners of the room they heard a sound like the rustling of wings.





THE SCARECROW

THE trouble really began when Joanna went to stay with the aunts. The others — Sam and Beth and little Timothy John — had measles. Joanna was nine, and she didn't catch the measles; so she was sent off to the country to stay in the strange house with Aunts Emmeline and Sophia.

When Joanna arrived, there was what grown-ups call a 'nice plain lunch.' Joanna rather wished it had been a little more like the lunches one has when a visitor anywhere. But she was a polite child; and ate her lunch; and said her mother was quite well, thank you, only very busy with nursing the others. And quite suddenly, when Joanna said this and thought of Mother dear at home nursing the others, a terrible lump came into her throat, and the place where her heart was hurt badly; and she began to cry.

The aunts thought it was foolish of Joanna to cry — especially in a house where there were chickens around to watch, and cows in the fields, and nice plain food, and 'Stories for my Boys and Girls' — a tiresome book about being obedient and tidy without any interestingness in being so. So the aunts said: 'Run to the bathroom, Joanna dear, and bathe your eyes. Then come and finish your lunch.'

In the bathroom — such a shiny clean bathroom it was — Joanna thought of the bathroom at home, and

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all their little towels in a row with initials in red — S. and B. and J. and T. J. And she sobbed miserably. Then she remembered the pineapple jelly downstairs; so she wiped her eyes and went quietly down the stairs.

The door of the dining-room was slightly open. And as Joanna came to the bottom of the stairs, she heard Aunt Sophia's voice. She was saying: 'It is a pity the poor child is so plain. She even frightened away the measles.' And because Joanna couldn't bear any more and because she knew it was awfully mean to listen, she went straight into the room.

Aunt Emmeline said: 'Come, child. Finish your meal. Afterwards you shall go out for a walk round-about.'

Joanna thought this sounded like a speech out of 'The Book of Hateful Aunts.' But they weren't really hateful. They were quite jolly, and had the kindest hearts, although they had a few funny ideas about children.

But now Joanna was too miserable to cry; almost too miserable to eat pineapple jelly; because, you see, she was a girl; and she didn't like to be ugly enough to frighten away measles.

I can't explain why it is that girls mind being ugly more than boys do; but it is so.

Joanna folded her napkin, and put on her outdoor shoes and her little woolly coat, and went to what Aunt Emmeline called 'roundabout' — to see the chickens and cows and things.

The Scarecrow

Joanna wondered why the others had never told her that she was ugly. She remembered how people never took quite such a fancy to her as to the others. Oh! And then she remembered lots of things. How her frocks never looked so pretty as Beth's. How, if they both got dirty, she always seemed the dirtier of the two. How, if they both ate candies, she and not Beth got the horrid spottiness which gives you away so. She thought it would have been heaps better if she had caught the measles. But no! Measles were frightened of her. Of course they were. Anybody would be frightened.

And then Joanna thought a most horrible thought. 'Perhaps when I grow up I shall be an ogress and frighten people. Perhaps a fairy at my birth said nobody should ever love me.'

And it was just at that moment that Joanna walked bang into the Scarecrow.

The Scarecrow stood up in a ploughed field. His arms stretched out stiffly. His ugly eyes stared. He wore an old ragged coat and a battered tall hat. His mouth grinned in a terrible way.

'Oh!' cried Joanna, starting back.

'Oh, yourself!' said the Scarecrow, grinning more than ever.

'Why, you are uglier than I am!' said Joanna.

'Don't mention it,' said the Scarecrow.

And Joanna looked up at him and saw two large tears come into his black eyes and roll down over his already rain-washed face.

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‘Don’t cry,’ she said. ‘I didn’t mean it.’

‘It’s all right,’ said the Scarecrow. ‘I was feeling so sorry for *you*. I’ve been through all that myself.’

‘All what?’ asked Joanna.

‘All that about being ugly enough to frighten people. It’s my job, you know.’

‘Do you hate it very much?’ asked Joanna.

‘Well, I did,’ answered the Scarecrow. ‘I don’t now.’

‘Why not?’ said Joanna.

‘It was like this,’ said the Scarecrow. ‘I was dreadfully upset to be stuck up here to frighten the birds away. I love birds. I’m a crow myself, if you forget the scare part. And I love the country, and I wanted all the country things to love me. And yet here I had to stand and grin with my heart one big ache. But one night I heard a queer little sobbing sound; and a voice said: “Oh! Mr. Scarecrow, will you hurt me if I fly up to you?” I trembled with joy. “On my honor, no,” I said. And up on my arm flew a little brown robin. “I’m so upset and worried,” she said. “And I’m afraid to tell any one who is beautiful and grand. I’m frightened of grand folk. So I thought, as you look so nice and ugly and comforting, that I’d tell you.” “What is it, dear Mrs. Robin?” I said. “It’s a great trouble,” she said. “I’ve built two houses, and cruel boys have torn them down. I’m heart-broken. Can you tell me anywhere I could make a safe home?” Well, ‘went on the Scarecrow,’ I trembled more than ever, and said: “If you will accept the inside of my

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The Scarecrow

broken tall hat, there's a large hole on top for the front door, and a side entrance on the brim." "Thank you, Mr. Scarecrow," cried Mrs. Robin. "You are a dear. I knew you were as kind as you look. I'll begin at once." And she did. And, oh, the joy when my ugliness sheltered four fluffy little birds with gaping beaks! And if I had not been ugly, you see, it would never have happened. Since then I have been on the friendliest terms with all the birds, and the field mice, and all the country things. At present a quite respectable young hedgehog is lodging in my left trouser leg.'

'What a lovely story!' said Joanna. 'But birds don't talk to human beings.'

'But other human beings do,' said the Scarecrow. 'Mark my words! You'll be a comfort to somebody yet.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Scarecrow,' said Joanna.

'Good-bye,' grinned the Scarecrow.

I know you are expecting this story to end with Joanna being a comfort to the aunts and being the light of the home. But it can't end quite like that. This is how it ends.

When the measles were over, Joanna went home.

Sam said: 'Hullo, Jo! Same old face. Nice to see it back again when you get used to it.'

'Be quiet!' said Joanna proudly. 'I've talked to a Scarecrow. Listen!' And she told all three of the others what had happened.

'Jolly good — for a girl,' said Sam.

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‘I wish it had happened to me,’ said Beth.

And Timothy John — little Timothy John — whispered: ‘Jo, will birdies build nests in *your* hat?’

‘No, you precious silly,’ laughed Joanna. ‘Of course not.’





SPILT MILK

JENNIFER was only a baby. Jennifer was five months old. Jennifer slept most of the day in her pram in the sun.

The Fairies sat on the edge of Jennifer's pram. They touched her while she slept, and that was why Jennifer laughed in her sleep.

One day, when she was fast, *fast* asleep, the Fairies, three hundred of them, carried her back to Fairyland, where all babies live awhile before they come to earth. And when they are fast, *fast* asleep it means that babies are back again in Fairyland.

The Fairies wanted to keep Jennifer. They asked the Fairy Queen if they might.

'There is no food for Jennifer. She cannot eat fairy food now she's a human baby,' said the Fairy Queen.

Then the Fairies ran away to the Brownies, who are the little funny people who do the Fairies' work. They fetch and carry and mend and clean. They sew with gossamer thread and sweep with thistledown brushes.

'Tell us how to keep Jennifer and get her food,' said the Fairies. And they waited for the Brownies to say how. Then they clapped their hands and danced away, for the Brownies promised to go to the farmer's wife at the edge of the wood and get some

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milk. For milk was Jennifer's food now she was a human baby.

And so, while Jennifer laughed with Fairies and made bubbles with her tiny mouth, the Brownies went for the milk.

A long, *long* time passed.

Jennifer's mother looked into the pram. 'Jennifer is fast, *fast* asleep,' she said. 'And I *do* believe she's dreaming. She's actually laughing in her sleep.' But she did not know that when babies laugh in their sleep it's because they are playing in Fairyland.

A long, *long* time passed.

And Jennifer stopped laughing. The Fairies grew sad. They grew cross. They cried out, 'Oh, where, *where* are those stupid Brownies?'

And after ages and *ages* the Brownies came, carrying milk. The Fairies snatched it. They gave it to Jennifer in a rosebud bottle. Jennifer puckered up her eyes. She poked out her little tongue. Bubble, bubble went Jennifer's mouth. Out came the milk. Jennifer wouldn't take it. Jennifer made a face, as *you* would if you said 'Ugh! Horrid!'

And then Jennifer cried.

'Oh! *oh!*' cried the Fairies, for quite suddenly Jennifer was gone.

In the pram Jennifer cried. Jennifer's mother came and lifted her out. She said: 'Little Jen Tucker, cry for her supper. Didum's cry then?'

And suddenly Jennifer laughed, and had her supper.

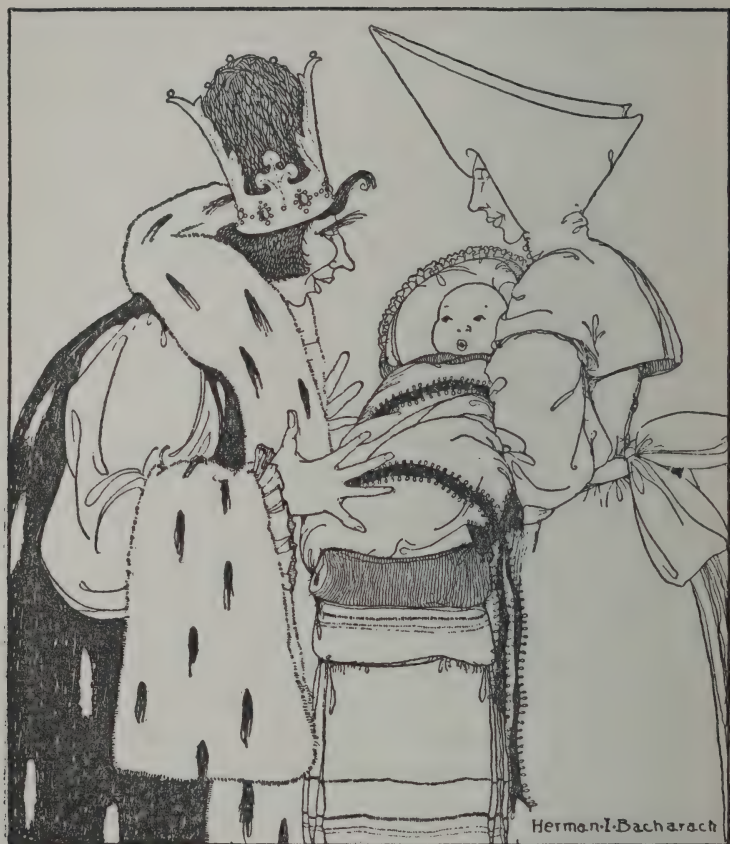
Spilt Milk

And what had happened in Fairyland was this.

The Brownies had gone for the milk. They seized the brown jug; they hurried and ran and scampered — too fast. Over a twig they stumbled. They tumbled. Over went the milk. And the Brownies sat down, and cried and cried and cried and *cried*. Then they looked into the empty jug, and they cried and cried and *cried* again. And they cried until they could cry no more. Then they went back to the edge of the wood, and there was more milk. So they seized it, and carefully they walked until they came to the place where they had fallen before. And they rested there. And they looked at the spilt milk from the first jug, and it seemed to them much the nicest milk — much nicer than the second. So they cried again for the spilt milk. They cried and cried and *cried*. And the second jug looked nastier and nastier, and they cried once more. You would never think Brownies could cry so. And when they simply couldn't cry any more, they went off very sadly with the second jugful. They brought it to Jennifer.

And *that* was why Jennifer puckered up her mouth, and made bubbles, and made a face — 'Ugh! Horrid!' and cried and ran away from Fairyland, home to her mother.

You see, while the Brownies cried over the spilt milk, *the fresh milk had gone sour!*





THE WHEEZING PRINCESS

ONCE upon a time there was a King, who became tremendously upset because there was nobody to succeed him and to wear the crown when he was dead. In the middle of his upsetness, a magician came to the palace and had audience with the King. When the magician had departed, the King behaved in a most extraordinary fashion. Kings, as a rule, do not use their crowns as hoops; nor do they poke privy councillors in the ribs with their scepters. But this King did both things; and only by a great effort and two doses of aspirin was he able to pull himself together and say stiffly: 'I beg pardon. I was very excited, and that began it.'

I may as well tell you that all the fuss was about a baby, who, the magician said, would soon be born in the palace. And as he was a worthy, hard-working and reliable magician, and his firm had been established for over two hundred years and had never once been found wrong in a forecast, there was every reason to be excited.

So the Queen, with her cheeks prettily pink and her eyes shining, ordered several push-carts of different colors, and made some beautiful clothes with her own fair hands. And all the ladies in the realm made woolly boots, caps, and coats. And the toy-makers made toys; the robe-makers made robes; and every aunt of

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every kind did open-work embroidery for the clothes of the little Prince who was soon to arrive at the royal palace.

At last one wild wet night, the little stranger appeared. Oh, cold it was; and pale stars looked through the cloudy sky; and the faint morning was nearly breaking through the night. Up and down the great stairs of the palace people stole softly, whispering the news to one another. The King, who had been dozing on the throne all night (you know what fun it is sleeping in queer places when anything is going to happen) woke up. He really had no need to sit on the throne all night; but he felt important, and said that he must be at his post. He rubbed his eyes, yawned, and then tore upstairs to see the Queen.

The Queen was tired and weak; for a mother always makes a long and perilous journey to bring back a baby. There in the royal room lay the Queen among the cushions. Oh! fair and proud she looked; and her starry eyes were shining more than ever. Close beside her was a queer little bundle.

‘Bring forth the prince,’ commanded the King, trembling, but haughty.

A pale pink and beautifully white-starched royal nurse lifted the bundle.

The King looked.

‘How very ugly!’ he remarked, unguardedly.

‘Oh! How dare you, William?’ gasped the Queen. ‘She’s lovely.’

‘S-S-s-she!’ stammered the King.

The Wheezing Princess

'It's a Princess, Your Majesty,' said the pink nurse firmly.

Then the King's rage knew no bounds. He forgot his pretty Queen; forgot to kiss her and to tell her how brave she had been to go the long, long journey all alone. He stormed downstairs; stamped among his councillors; and burst into worse and worse fury because the Queen had brought, not the longed-for Prince, but a Princess. In vain did they tell him of the charm of girls.

'She's ugly,' snapped the King.

'All little new babies are, Your Majesty,' ventured a large and important high councillor, who had enjoyed eight ugly babies himself. 'They have not had time to adjust their features to their new environment.'

'New fiddlesticks!' roared the King, losing his temper more hopelessly than ever. And he ordered the high councillor at once to be deprived of office, and his name to be struck off the royal roll, for using two long hard words when speaking.

Up in the royal birthday room where the Queen was, the baby Princess whimpered a little and opened her sweet blue eyes.

'Did they say she was uggy-wuggy?' crooned the Queen. 'Pretty, teeny, weeny thing.' And she laughed for glee that she had so tiny a Princess with whom to share her secrets.

This was only the beginning of the trouble.

The Princess was christened with the name Anem-

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one. When she began to grow up and her ugliness flew away and her face blossomed like a pale flower, it was discovered that a wretched Fairy, who had not been invited to the christening, had sent a curse instead of a blessing. And her curse was this — that in the little white breast of the Princess there should live a strange, cruel, tiny but fat demon, called Asthma; and when the Princess wanted very particularly to laugh or run or play, Asthma would pinch the pipes through which the air runs; and, of course, without air you cannot do anything at all. And at that moment the Princess would gasp, and her thoughts and her play would stop. There inside her lived the horrid fat demon, who squeezed all the air out of the dear soft throat of the little Princess Anemone. Even all the King's doctors and all the Queen's sisters and aunts could discover no way of killing Asthma; and nobody has quite discovered it to this day, for his family is still alive. So very much fun was stolen from Anemone. The moment she laughed or became excited, Asthma clutched her, and then such queer sounds came from the breast of the Princess — queer little wheezings — now long; now short; now loud; now soft. It was really so dreadful to hear, that the Queen used to sob at the hurting sound each time.

It was not until Princess Anemone was eight years old that she gave Asthma 'one in the eye,' as the saying is — which means that she beat him. She was sitting one night upon the Queen's lap, painfully

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The Wheezing Princess

gasping; and the dreadful wheezy sound made the Queen shudder. She held Anemone very gently, and her great tears fell on the tumbled hair of the little Princess.

Wheeze, Wheeze, went Anemone's chest. Then a queer little gurgle. Then a tiny kind of shriek. And suddenly Anemone laughed wheezily.

'Listen, Motherkin,' she whispered. 'The noises are like the voices and songs and cries of little men. There! That's a fat one. Wheeze! Wheeze. That's a thin one, dressed in yellow with a scarlet cap. Wheeze, Wheeze. They're teasing Asthma and leading him a dance.'

The Queen listened. The noises seemed just so. And by the time the clock struck midnight, the Queen and the little Princess were quiet and happy, and they were making up stories about the little yellow men who were held prisoners by Asthma in the dark caverns and passages of Anemone's chest.

So Anemone took the stuffing out of the fat demon. She learned to be as patient as the night is long, when Asthma got her; and there was no end to the pretends she had and the stories she made up. Longer and longer grew the stories. More and more adventures had the little funny men, who had never been on land or sea, but were in a prison kept by the demon whose family is alive to this day.

Then there came troubles to the kingdom where Anemone lived. Fierce warriors attacked the cities. So many were they, and so mighty, that no army

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could quell them. The country was terribly broken; and the people cried to the King to deliver them.

‘Alas!’ the King would reply, ‘I am old and broken myself. Oh! that I had a son — a Prince worthy of my name. I have only a defenseless daughter; and she cannot carry a sword or ride forth into battle.’

And nearer and nearer to the King’s palace marched the mighty warriors. They would take no bribes or fine gold to turn back. Nothing could draw them away from their determination to seize the palace. And the King bitterly reproached his daughter for being a girl, and he would not even look into her face.

At last, one day word was brought that the first of the warriors had reached the forest which was close to the palace. The King rushed away from the palace, wearing his best crown and carrying only an umbrella. The poor Queen hid in the linen cupboard. And Anemone — Anemone walked out of the palace gate toward the forest, which lay like a golden sea that autumn day.

Straight and delicate and fearless walked the Princess. Slowly she walked, for the demon forbade her to hasten. And there at the edge of the forest she met three of the great chief warriors. They cried to her to halt; and then asked her name and dwelling. They spoke together of her great beauty and the fairness of her face.

Then Anemone brought forth her magic power, the power which had taken the stuffing out of her old

The Wheezing Princess

enemy and perhaps would quell a whole army. She spoke in her soft, sweet, shy way, and begged the great chiefs to be seated while she told them the story of her native land. And, beguiled by her persuasion so gentle, they sat, although the ground was damp and one of the chiefs already had a sniffing cold. In her low voice Anemone told them wonderful stories of lands she had never seen; of adventures she had only dreamed of. Her voice rose to them like perfect music. They listened entranced.

When each story was ended, they begged for more; and Anemone went on and on. She told them of the place of her birth, and of her love for it. She told them of her father's disappointment because no Prince had come. And then, simply and bravely, she raised her sweet eyes to those wild and cruel ones, and asked the warriors to spare her little kingdom and go back whence they had come.

The darkness had fallen, and the wind stirred the hair of the little Princess. Quite suddenly one warrior knelt at her feet and promised that he and his men would depart and never trouble the country again.

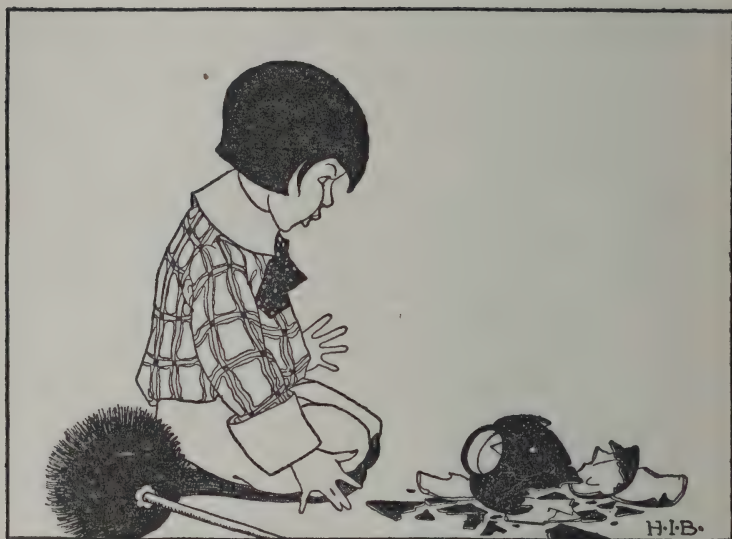
'For,' said he, 'you are more terrible to me than an army with banners. Your wonder makes me kneel. Your voice makes me weep. Your magic stories stir my hard heart.' And he kissed the dust where the Princess stood.


That night the kingdom dwelt in peace, and the King crept back in shame and yet in joy, because he knew that the Princess, who had beaten her own

The Enchanted Children

enemy, had also conquered a mighty army. And you must know that it came to pass that the Princess Anemone had not only conquered a mighty army, but also won a Prince. For, when the country had all grown joyous again, she gave her hand in marriage to the chief warrior who had knelt before her, and who had given up robbery and become quite a reformed character.

The King and Queen died very peacefully soon after the wedding; and the newly married pair governed the kingdom well, and lived happy ever after.





THE BROKEN JUG

HUGH was only six; and he lived in a large house with Uncle Adair.

Uncle Adair was tall and thin and, unlike most uncles, he was often cross. He had a big white mustache.

Besides Hugh in Uncle Adair's house there was Mrs. Bassett, the housekeeper; and Jerry, the gardener; and Emma, the cook; and Freda, who dusted and polished and smiled at Hugh. Hugh liked Emma and Freda. Emma often said, 'Pale lamb 'e is'; and then she would give Hugh a hot cooky from the oven. Hugh was looked after by Mrs. Bassett, who was stern and could not play. So, you see, Hugh was very much alone.

Uncle Adair had lots and lots of bright cups and saucers and dishes and basins. He loved these, and dusted them himself. Hugh watched Uncle Adair's long thin fingers in and out of the brightly colored china things.

One day Uncle Adair did not come downstairs to breakfast. Mrs. Bassett said, 'Don't make a noise. Your uncle has a headache.'

So Hugh stole about quietly. Then he thought, 'I'll dust Uncle Adair's china. He'll be pleased.' He crept into Uncle Adair's room; and very quietly he dusted.

Hugh had nearly finished dusting when Sarah,

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the cat, jumped up quickly from the hearth. Hugh jumped a little, too; and a bright jug fell out of his hand on to the hard polished floor.

Hugh looked at the broken pieces. Then he felt frightened. He picked them up, and carried them to the cupboard where he kept his toys.

At lunch-time Uncle Adair came down. Hugh heard his stick tapping the stair. Hugh felt sure Uncle Adair would be dreadfully angry. He took the broken pieces of the bright jug, and went into Uncle Adair's room, and showed him the pieces.

Uncle Adair was more angry than you could think. He got very red in the face, and rang the bell for Mrs. Bassett.

'Take him away; take him away,' he said. 'Put him to bed. Careless, meddling young rascal.'

So Hugh went off with Mrs. Bassett. Mrs. Bassett said, 'You young imp. Why did you touch them things?' And Hugh was so frightened that he could not say, 'I only wanted to help.'

Mrs. Bassett left him in his little bed.

Hugh began to cry. You see, his mother had left him when he was the tiniest baby; and his daddy was far away across the sea. If Hugh had had brothers and sisters, as perhaps you have, he would have learnt how to kick and scream and soon feel better. But he hadn't learnt; so he cried softly. It hurts most of all to cry softly.

Hugh saw the sun white and bright through the curtains. He knew the birds and little creeping

The Broken Jug

things were playing in the garden; and he was in his little bed like a bird in a cage. It seemed a long, long time, and the house was so quiet.

Then Freda crept up to Hugh, and gave him some beautiful green lime drops. She kissed him and said, 'Silly little kid! Why didn't you hide the bits? He would never have known. He would never see a jug had gone. There! There! You'll be all right to-morrow.' And Freda went away.

Hugh thought, 'If I had thrown away the bits of the broken jug, I wouldn't be in bed.'

Just as he was thinking this the Dearest, Gentlest One of All came in at the window, straight out of the sunshine; and took Hugh up in the strongest, safest arms; and carried him to the Inside of the World. You and I live on the Outside; but when we love any one very much, or do splendid things, somebody from the Magic Inside of the World is whispering those things to us. And that is where the Gentlest One took Hugh. Gentlest looks after all the littlest and the lost things.

Inside the World was a most lovely place. There were beautiful gardens; and trees always green; and children playing; and babies chuckling; and mothers singing. Hugh sat on the grass and looked all round. Then he saw a crowd of little children come running to Gentlest; and they said: 'O Dearest, we were to have the jolliest feast. We have cakes and fruit and little cups; but we cannot find a jug to carry the milk. What shall we do?'

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Gentlest smiled and said, 'Shall we have the feast another time?'

But the children danced up and down, and cried, 'You — Dearest — give us a jug.'

Gentlest said, 'You know so well that things of this Land cannot come except from the Brave Ones of the Outside Land.'

So all the children sat down and waited.

Soon Gentlest, who was standing by a clear pool, said, 'Come, look.'

And Hugh and all the children ran to the pool and they saw deep down in it a picture of the Outside Land.

There was a room full of bright pots; and a little boy with a duster. Presently a jug fell and was broken; and the boy took the pieces in his hands and was very frightened; but, more than the frightenedness, he was sorry and brave. He showed the pieces to a very stern thin man, with a big white mustache, who was awfully angry.

Then a most wonderful thing happened. All the children lifted their heads, and looked at Hugh; and they said: 'Here he is — the little Outside boy! He has brought us a jug.' And they danced and shouted for joy.

And Hugh found that he was holding in his hands the broken pieces of jug; but as soon as he saw the pieces they joined up; and the jug was whole again. The children took it and filled it with milk; and they and Hugh and Gentlest had a most lovely feast under the green trees.

The Broken Jug

After the feast Gentlest took Hugh into his soft blue cloak and said: 'Come! it is time to go back to the Outside of the World. You must tell all the Brave Ones there how the broken things are mended here.'

And when Hugh looked, there was his room; and his little bed; and Mrs. Bassett at the door.

And Mrs. Bassett was saying: 'Now, then, hurry up! You've slept till to-morrow.'



Herman J. Bacharach



THE SPELL

THERE was once a King who had three children — Prince Max; Princess Gladiola; and little Princess Jane. Nobody called her Jane. Everybody called her ‘Baby Dear,’ or sometimes ‘Your Royal Highness, Baby Dear’; until Miss Chipchin came to the palace. Miss Chipchin called her ‘Princess Jane.’ And I think this was why the children first disliked Miss Chipchin.

Miss Chipchin, I must tell you, came as the answer to an advertisement which the King put in the ‘Court News.’ The Queen, sad to say, was one day quite tired of the King, and called him all sorts of horrid names. So just before bedtime the King got her changed by magic into a sea-gull; but, as there was no sea near the kingdom, she flew away and never came back. And after that the King found the three children quite a handful. So he was told by his advisers that he must get a governess for them.

The King put this advertisement in the ‘Court News’:

WANTED. Strong, capable governess. Not pretty. For three royal children. Good salary. Liberal outings. Live with family. No washing. No Latin.

You do not know what this advertisement means. Nor do I. Nor did the King. But he was told that it

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was the latest thing in advertisements; so he waved his scepter about, and said: 'All right! . All right! Stick it in.'

There were five hundred and eighty-seven letters in reply. But five hundred and eighty-six of the ladies, who wanted to be strong capable governesses, were very pretty, or pretty, or considered not bad-looking. So they would not do. The King was so afraid that his courtiers would fall in love with the governess; or would gossip with her; or that she would always be wanting the royal pages to run errands to fetch from the stores things like scent, nail polish, or powder for her pretty nose. So he chose Miss Chipchin.

Miss Chipchin was fierce and thin. Nobody ever saw her smile or heard her laugh. She nearly always had a cold, and used extra large handkerchiefs which had been left to her in his will by her grandfather. You can easily see that the children did not like her. She always went for the dullest walks. The lessons she gave were duller than the walks. And she was always making remarks about lolling at table, and things like that. As Prince Max said: 'What's the good of having dinner, if you can't loll a little?'

When Miss Chipchin had been at the palace two weeks, the royal children said they would not stand it any longer. Even Baby Dear said, 'Don't want Chippy.' So Max and Gladiola and Baby Dear went to the King's Dispenser. A dispenser is one who gets rid of pains for you. Miss Chipchin was a very bad pain to the three children, you see.

The Spell

The Dispenser said: 'I'm very sorry. I wish I could do something. But to remove this particular pain is against the Rules of the Kingdom.' And he unhooked from the wall a fat Book and pointed to Rules 3295, 3296, 3297, which said:

One must not poison one's governess.

One must not change one's governess into a white rat.

One must not use any dispenser for the unlawful purpose of getting rid of one's governess.

The children, I am sorry to say, offered the Dispenser some foreign stamps, a piece of licorice, and a mouth-organ to break the rules. In some countries this is called 'graft.' But the Dispenser said that it was as much as his position was worth, and he could not accept the bribe.

The children sat on the Dispensary steps to hate Miss Chipchin a little more.

Max said: 'I wish we could go to Australia and get away from her.'

Gladiola said: 'So do I. I wish there was a magic spade which would dig us through the earth to Australia.'

Baby Dear said: 'Is 'Stralia in the ground?'

Max said: 'No, silly! But the earth's round; and our kingdom is opposite Australia. So, if you dug through the earth, you'd come to it; and there would be blue sky like it is here.'

And they went on hating Miss Chipchin, who was just then having one of the liberal outings—promised in the advertisement, you remember.

The Enchanted Children

Then they went into the palace — except Baby Dear.

Baby Dear went into the palace kitchen garden, where the earth was rich and soft. Baby Dear got her little spade and began to dig. She was only five, you see. A long, long time Princess Baby Dear went on digging. Her little arms ached. Her face was hot and dirty. She dug quite a big, deep hole. Suddenly she gave a scream; for there shone something blue.

‘Blue sky of ’Stralia!’ shouted Baby Dear.

She bent down into the hole, and reached out her hands, and found — the sky of Australia was only a broken piece of blue glass — glass from an old bottle — glass which, as soon as Baby Dear touched it, cut her dirty little finger.

Then Baby Dear began to cry. Some one coming up the garden path heard her. It was Miss Chipchin. Miss Chipchin lifted Baby Dear out of the hole, and looked at the poor bleeding finger; and very quickly she took out of her black bag a large clean white handkerchief — one of those left by Grandpa Chipchin. She tore off the hem and bound Baby Dear’s finger.

Baby Dear said: ‘I was digging to ’Stralia.’

Miss Chipchin said: ‘What for?’

Baby Dear said: ‘To get away from you.’

Then a queer and terrible thing happened. Miss Chipchin began to cry. Two tears splashed down on Baby Dear’s hand. Baby Dear could not stand that. She put her arms round Miss Chipchin’s neck, as she was lifted up, and kissed her.

The Spell

Miss Chipchin gave a laugh and a jump. Yes, really. A jump! And she cried: 'The spell is broken! Oh! yes. It is!'

Just at that moment the others came out into the garden; and they saw that something had happened. And they listened while Miss Chipchin told them that once she had been very pretty and young, with curls. And somebody, who seemed to love her very much, suddenly did not love her any more, and went away and never came back. And she grew sad and nasty; and, worst of all, afraid of children. And one night a dreadful spell was cast upon her. The spell said: 'Without a kiss, a tear, and a hurting hand, you shall never get back to your happy land.' (This is as near as I can translate a foreign spell into English.)

And Miss Chipchin said: 'The spell has come and gone. Baby Dear hurt her hand. I cried. She kissed me. Come now, dears; we must wash the hand and bind it up again.'

It was really true — true as life. Miss Chipchin grew jolly; and found the most interesting lessons; and did her hair in a new loose way, which let out the imprisoned curls.

And the King said: 'Bless me! How that woman has altered. If I don't marry her, somebody else will.'

So he gave the children and the governess a picnic, and he went, too. And when they were opening the bottles of ginger ale which had corks, and the pops were loud, he said: 'Miss Chipchin, will you be my Queen?'

The Enchanted Children

And Miss Chipchin said: 'I will, with pleasure.'

And she grew sweeter and sweeter, and made a splendid Queen.

And if the new Queen had a favorite (it is wrong to have favorites in a family, of course; so perhaps she didn't), it was Baby Dear, who dug through the dark earth to the shining blue, which is always hidden somewhere.





THE BIRDS

IN a garden some miles from an English city there lived a Blackbird and a Thrush.

There were other birds; but none sang so thrillingly as the Thrush or whistled so sweetly as the Blackbird. From the midst of the lilac or the bursting ash, they sang.

Beneath the trees, on the grass, there sat a Black Cat. She belonged to the house beyond the trees; but she loved little birds more than milk or fish scraps. With her green eyes glittering she watched the birds as they flew above.

One sunny day the Blackbird and the Thrush had an idea. The same thought came into both their little heads at the same time. So they called the Robin, who was a good bird for listening, and told him their wonderful plan.

The Blackbird began: 'The Thrush and I' he said, 'are fed up with singing. We keep on doing it — singing and whistling, singing and whistling — all for nothing.'

'I thought you did it for joy,' said the Robin.

'Well, of course, we do in a kind of way,' said the Thrush. 'But we don't see why we should go on singing for joy and nothing else. Why shouldn't we make something out of our voices? Human beings are very wise — or they think they are — and they make money, and build houses, and are safe forevermore.'

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‘What if they do?’ said the Robin. ‘You don’t want a house like that. There are no worms in houses; and not much singing, except those silly songs they screech at parties.’

‘That’s just it!’ cried the Blackbird, very excited. ‘We’re going to make songs; and we’re going to take a small shop, write our songs down and sell them. Then we shall buy a large garden (cats not allowed), fill it with worms, and live happy ever after.’

‘But,’ said the Robin, ‘nobody ever heard of birds keeping shop.’

‘Oh, you stupid!’ said the Thrush, ‘we shall have the disguise of human beings.’

‘Oh!’ said the Robin.

‘And, if you like,’ said the Blackbird, ‘you shall join us.’

‘I’m not considered a very good singer,’ said the Robin, blushing birdily; for he had a belief, like most of us, that he had really quite a fine voice.

‘Oh, not to sing, or write songs,’ said the Thrush, hastily. ‘But to wear a brown-and-gold uniform, and to open the door for customers.’

‘No, thanks!’ said the Robin, huffily. ‘Ask a sparrow. My family has never sunk as low as that.’ And he flew off to tell all the other birds that the Thrush and the Blackbird were tired of singing for joy and nothing else; and were going to open a shop; make much money; buy a garden (cats not allowed); fill it with worms, and live happy ever after.

That was how it came about. The Blackbird and

Thrush got disguised, and took a shop in the city. They looked two queer little men, with bright birdy eyes. But very musical people are permitted to look as they like best; so that is neither here nor there. They painted the name up over the door:

A. THRUSH, B. BLACK & CO.

There wasn't really any 'Co.'; but you have to begin in good style.

They did very well. They wrote many songs, which had names like these: 'Thrush's Spring Song,' 'Blackbird's Flute Melody in C Sharp.'

There was one song which became very popular, and was whistled by all the boys in the street. The words began, 'Sing me to sleep; the cat has gone.'

They had many customers, and they began to be quite rich. They kept their shop for nearly a year, and made enough money to buy a garden (cats not allowed) and fill it with worms, and live happy ever after.

One night they shut up shop and counted their money. And they decided to throw off their disguise and be birds again; fly back to the garden where they used to live; tell the news to all their bird friends; make them thoroughly jealous; and then they would come back for their money; and buy the garden (cats not allowed) and fill it with worms for ever and ever.

So they threw off their disguise, and shook their wings. It felt so queer to be birds after being men for months. Then on to the window-sill they hopped.

The Enchanted Children

A wagon was rumbling past in the street below.

One, two, three — off they flew.

And then — oh, dear! oh, dear! — they wobbled in the air; and swerved; and dropped down, down on to some sacks in the passing wagon.

‘Whatever has happened?’ gasped the Thrush.

‘Wings out of practice,’ whispered the Blackbird.

‘Better stick here for a bit.’

So they sat in the wagon till it rumbled out of the city and past the old garden where they used to live.

Then they made another big effort.

Up — up a little, and down they came into the lilac tree, and held on for dear life.

Down below sat the Black Cat, her green eyes glittering. Her patient green eyes glittered more than ever.

The trouble began. Days came and went; but the Blackbird and Thrush never flew. They had been in the shop so long that they had lost the use of their wings. And they had lived indoors so long that they had lost their voices, too. They caught cold, you see; and the cold settled in their throats; and only ‘Squawk, squawk,’ came from the throats which used to tremble with lovely songs.

Now and then they thought of their waiting money; but what was the use of it now? They had left their disguise at the shop; and they could not trust themselves feebly to fly when the Black Cat sat below, her green eyes glittering. They hopped dismally from bough to bough. The Robin brought them a worm or

The Birds

two. But they grew thinner and thinner; and at last they fell from the lilac to the ground, both of them dead.

The Cat got them after all. But the cat didn't get much satisfaction from dead birds, so she left them there.

And two fat kind hens found them, and scratched two little graves, and buried them.

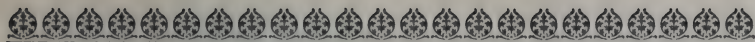
And the Owl from the barn wrote over their graves. The Owl had a fountain pen, which had been given to him for his kindness in allowing his photograph to appear in an advertisement of pens. This is what the Owl wrote:

This Blackbird and Thrush
Both went with a rush
Into business.
They made quite a lot,
But completely forgot,
If you don't use your wings,
You lose 'em.

If you don't sing for joy,
Be you girl, bird, or boy,
But only care take
For what you can make
For yourself,
When you want to rejoice,
You'll have quite lost
Your voice.

The Owl said he could have done better if he'd had more time. But we all say that. Anyway, it's not what the Owl wrote which matters, but the story.





LITTLE PRINCESS

THERE was once upon a time a Little Princess. And Princesses, when they lived once upon a time, could have whatever they wished; and this was just as bad for them as it would be for you and me.

Little Princess played happily all day in the palace gardens. There were many flowers, and bright tame birds, and clear pools to paddle in. So Little Princess was happy, happy all the day.

So very happy was Little Princess that, when it was bedtime, she was not ready. And it was no use for the royal nurses to say, 'Little Princess must sleep.' For Little Princess would cry: 'No! No! No! I hate the night. I hate the dark. I want it always to be day and never night at all.' And sometimes she would wake in the dark and scream at the strange things which only come when you are little and frightened and there is no sound anywhere.

One night Little Princess woke and screamed.

Suddenly a lovely little Fairy flew in at the window. She had bright wings and a silver dress; and with her she brought a tiny light.

'What is the matter, Little Princess?' the Fairy said.

'It's the dark. I'm so frightened,' sobbed Little Princess. 'I wish it might never be dark any more.'

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‘It shall be just as you wish,’ said the Fairy; and she flew away.

Almost at once the sun peeped in at the window; and one of the royal nurses bustled into the bedroom with a pale green frock on her arm. ‘Time to get up, Little Princess,’ she said. And so the day began.

And do you know? It all came true, as the Fairy had promised. For days and days the sun shone and never went down. And, whenever the Little Princess was put to bed, the green shades were pulled down to keep out the light. Little Princess never woke up frightened in the dark. *There was no dark.*

But something else happened. All the people began to look tired and ill. The flowers drooped and faded. There was no dew on the grass, for the dew does not come till the sun goes down.

One day Little Princess was paddling in the pool, when there was a scuttling in the wet grass; and a large, thin, tired Frog crept up and looked at Little Princess with frightened, goggly eyes.

‘Don’t be frightened,’ said Little Princess.

‘Oh! But I *am* frightened,’ croaked the Frog. And he wobbled like a bowl full of jelly.

‘What are you frightened of?’ asked Little Princess.

‘Of the light, to be sure,’ sobbed the Frog. ‘Frogs, you know, have most of their fun in the night. They croak for joy, and hop and dance. And now it’s never dark. It’s dreadful light all the time.’

‘Oh!’ said Little Princess.

Little Princess

The thin frightened Frog hopped away; and there came instead a little company of Glow-Worms. Creep, creep, creep, they came, darting with fright under the longest grass.

‘Don’t be frightened,’ said Little Princess.

‘But we ARE frightened,’ whispered the Glow-Worms.

‘What are you frightened of?’ asked Little Princess.

‘We used to have such beautiful times at night,’ whispered the Glow-Worms. ‘The dark hedges we lit up with the little lamp we carry in our tails; and everybody was so pleased with us; and we were happy. But now it never is night; and nobody wants our light.’

‘Oh,’ said Little Princess.

The weary Glow-Worms trembled away; and instead there came three Crickets. Their little wings shook, and they shrank back.

‘Oh! Don’t be frightened,’ said Little Princess.

‘BUT WE ARE FRIGHTENED,’ sang the Crickets, sadly.

‘What are you frightened of?’ asked Little Princess.

‘The sun is in our eyes all the time,’ sang the Crickets. ‘We wait and wait for the dear, beautiful darkness; and it never, never comes.’

‘Oh!’ said Little Princess.

Little Princess began to cry.

At that very moment the Fairy flew to the edge of the pool.

The Enchanted Children

‘What is the matter now?’ the Fairy said, rather crossly. ‘Really, a crying Princess is a great nuisance.’

‘Oh! Let it be dark again. Please, let it be dark again,’ sobbed Little Princess. ‘I’ve done such a dreadful thing. I’ve stopped the Frogs’ dance, and put out the Glow-Worms’ light, and spoiled the Crickets’ song. They’re as frightened of the light as I am of the dark. But I never will be again.’

‘Think twice before you wish once,’ said the Fairy. ‘But it shall be all right this time.’

And the Fairy flew away.

Quite soon the sun went down; the dew fell; the stars peeped; and a kind of gladness came over all the gardens like a soft dark curtain.

‘Little Princess! Little Princess!’ called the royal nurses. ‘Come! Come! It is bedtime.’ And Little Princess ran to her bath and bed.

In her bed, in the sweet, dark night, Little Princess lay — oh! so happy — thinking of the Glow-Worms’ light making the hedges beautiful. And through the open window she heard the Crickets singing madly.

‘The Frogs are doing their frog-hop to that tune,’ said Little Princess to herself.

And Little Princess fell fast asleep.





THE SEVEN FLAGONS

ALL this happened in medieval times — the times when there were knights and ladies, dragons and castles, and all the other things we read about in books. In those days there lived near London a knight whose name was Edward. I cannot truthfully say he was a first-class knight, because he had been delicate from babyhood. Perhaps being delicate made him nervous. Anyway, when he was a boy, he was afraid of many things; and everybody knows that a tip-top knight is afraid of very little.

Sir Edward's mother loved him exceedingly. She made potions for his weak chest; and when he had headaches she 'bound a kerchief round his brow' — like in 'King John,' you know, by William Shakespeare.

So Edward had not very much chance of making a good show as a knight. He was afraid of horses; so his charger was a large, quiet steed of the kind used by farmers when they drive their wagons to market. But Edward had a nice disposition; and he was the very first boy in England to be kind to the buzzing fly.

From all this you will gather that Edward grew up into a very unpleasant young man. But you must wait until you have heard all the story.

When Edward was grown up, he very desperately loved a beautiful lady, who lived in a large and

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moated castle with her noble parents. She also had five sisters. When the sisters heard about Edward, they giggled.

One sister said: 'A knight, forsooth! He has only a little hair, and that is of pale yellow color.'

Another said: 'His mother maketh him soothing plasters.'

And another said: 'His only adventure will be rheum in the head.' (Rheum is a snuffly cold.)

Even the noble parents said he was no great catch, although, of course, they did not say it in exactly these words.

But there was no doubt that Edward was very much in love; and being in love makes even the stupidest person rather a dear. So the Lady Rosalys thought; and she said to herself: 'He has a sweet tenor voice; and I'm sure he will make a kind and faithful husband.'

In those days it was no good telling your lady you loved her, so would she kindly come and mend your hose and doublet, and look after you in a comfortable castle on the outskirts of London. You had to *show* her you loved her; and, if you did not, she jolly well expected you to do it. So Edward knew that Lady Rosalys was expecting him to do a little adventuring. But he could not think of anything splendid enough; so he told his mother all about it. His mother was very pleased. She said that Lady Rosalys was a sweet girl and would look after Edward's chest. And then she told Edward a secret.

The Seven Flagons

She said: 'In the great forest beyond the city are two little green dwellings. They are green with the dripping rain of a thousand years. In the first lives a Wise Man, who can advise a youth how to win his lady. In the second lives a Wicked One, whose tongue is fair speaking, but whose heart is cruel. He takes delight in spoiling the joy and beauty of all things. Beware the second dwelling. Go to the first; and you will find your adventure.'

So Edward, with high hope and beating heart, called for Dobbin, his trusty charger; and he rode off to the forest beyond the city. Lady Rosalys waved from her casement as he passed the castle, and she thought: 'Dear old pet! I wish he didn't have to take such care. That Dobbin is a sight!' (She thought this in proper medieval language.) But she had a tender heart; so she closed the casement, and thought how she would liven Edward up a bit when they were in their own castle.

Edward reached the forest in just double-slow time; but, as he said, 'Better safe than never.' And quite suddenly the two little green houses came in sight. As Edward looked, a horrible fear came into his heart. He could not tell which was the first and which the second. He became muddled and flustered; and, instead of using his little sense, he knocked at one of the doors, and said: 'Is this ye house of ye Wise Man?'

It was not. It was the house of the Wicked One, who smiled and answered: 'What is your pleasure,

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fair knight? Step within ye door.' (You see, this is a real medieval story.)

So Edward went in. The Wicked One listened, and was seemingly very nice about Edward's adventure for the sake of his lady.

'You will win her, by my troth, young sir,' he said. (He had no troth, really: so it did not matter what he said.) 'There are three adventures, by one of which you shall succeed. First: You must seize the youngest sister of Lady Rosalys by her golden hair, which is her pride, and then beat her till she cryeth for mercy.'

Edward felt awful; but he said nothing.

'Second: You must go into the courtyard of the castle of the noble lord, the father of Lady Rosalys, and strike him with your sword and grievously wound him so that he falleth to the ground.'

Edward simply could not stand that. He had a nice disposition, you remember. He cried: 'But these be outrageous adventures!'

'There is yet another — the third,' went on the Wicked One. 'Near the gate of the noble lord's castle is a tavern. Go there and demand seven flagons of red wine, and drink them boldly. The fair Lady Rosalys loveth a bold man and one who can carry wine.'

'But I can't carry it,' faltered Edward.

'Choose one of the three,' said the Wicked One.

So Edward thought, and thought, and thought; and at last he chose to drink the seven flagons, because it seemed to him the least hurtful adventure. And he rode home through the forest.

The Seven Flagons

The next day at noon a knight rode up to the tavern by the gate of the castle where lived the Lady Rosalys; and he demanded seven flagons of red wine. The keeper of the tavern was ready for business, and he brought the flagons, and the knight began to drink, sitting on a bench by the roadside.

One flagon! Two flagons! Edward (for it was he) felt quite bold after the second flagon; and, seeing the youngest sister of Lady Rosalys passing with her maidens, he stumbled across the road, seized her by her golden hair, and beat her so fiercely with the back of his sword that in three seconds she screamed for mercy. Edward shouted and waved his arms, and drove the maidens into the castle. Then he went back to the bench and drank some more. Three flagons! Four flagons! Five flagons! Six flagons! Seven flagons! Then Edward felt much bolder than before. He went into the courtyard of the castle, and he saw the noble lord coming to find who had roughly treated his daughter. Edward smote the noble lord with his sword, and wounded him so grievously that he fell to the ground. The servants of the castle seized him very soon after without difficulty; for the seven flagons made him desire to sleep and he had no strength left in him. The servants threw him into a dungeon and left him there for several days. Aided by this rest and some occasional meals of bread and water, Edward came to his senses, and remembered with fear his strange doings.

At last he was released from the dungeon; but he

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was no longer a knight who loved a lady. He loved the red wine which had crept into his blood. More than he loved the Lady Rosalys, Edward loved the red demon of the seven flagons.

And in the days afterwards, Lady Rosalys, pale, proud, and sad, would sometimes from her casement see a ragged, stupid creature, who crept about the roads begging for money to buy wine. And when they passed him, people would often whisper: 'See yon fellow! Once he was a knight and loved the Lady Rosalys; but now he loves nothing but the red wine.'





THE ROBE OF PRINCESS GODETIA

THERE was once an ugly Princess named Godetia. Unlike most Princesses of this kind, she was not ugly for any particular reason. She was not greedy or unkind; she was not horrid to her sisters. Indeed, she was of as nice a disposition as is possible for the very plain; and Godetia was as plain as a pikestaff. I do not exactly know why a pikestaff is plain; but there it is.

Of course, you know that in nearly all stories the princes or princesses are what story-makers call 'redeemed' by 'adorable gray eyes, thickly fringed with jet-black lashes,' or, though not handsome, are 'singularly attractive and wonderfully fascinating in manner.' But Princess Godetia was ugly; and that is all there is to say about her looks. It was very difficult to understand why this was so, since both the King and the Queen were types of royal beauty, and the other five Princesses were very good-looking. So, naturally, Godetia was left out of it, when Princes called at the palace.

It was all in vain that Godetia's aunt said, as your aunt or mine may have said to us, that Godetia had a pleasant face, and that it was better to have a good heart than good looks. Godetia said, when she was seventeen, 'I think I could manage both good looks and a good heart.'

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Well, as Godetia grew up, she hated being ugly; and she tried potions and magic of all sorts. But her nose did not grow less blobby, nor did her eyes become large and lustrous. No lashes grew thick and curling; and by no means would her large and good-natured mouth become like a pink rosebud or any other pleasant flower.

The King and Queen had many an argument and much anxiety as to what was to be done about Godetia. For, you see, there is nothing to do but to marry, if you are a Princess. Otherwise, what on earth would become of fairy tales? But now my secret is out. I may as well tell you that this is the first story ever written about a good Princess who did not marry a handsome and gallant youth; and it is just as lovely a story as if she had done so — indeed, more lovely.

As I have said, the King and Queen were very worried about the future of Godetia. And when at the end of a long talk they had got no further, the King, in desperation, would basely say: ‘At any rate, she hasn’t got her ugliness from *my* family.’ Whereupon, the Queen would answer crossly: ‘I think she’s the image of your grandmother.’ Then the King would reply: ‘My dear, I think you forget your great-aunt, the Dowager Empress of Dorchester.’ And the Queen, unable to answer this, would burst into tears.

It was on one of these painful occasions that Godetia herself came into the private parlor of the palace

The Robe of Princess Godetia

(a small apartment, seventy feet long and fifty feet wide, furnished in silver and green, where the family did things, happy but unroyal, like eating oranges by sucking the juice out of them), and Godetia said in her dear, gentle voice: 'May I speak to you, Father and Mother?'

The Queen dried her eyes, and said: 'Yes, come in, my daughter.' She always said 'My darling' to the others; but I suppose it is difficult for a Queen to call a thoroughly plain Princess 'darling.' The King nodded, and began to crack walnuts. It is always easier to listen to annoying people if you do something at the same time. So Godetia began to speak.

She said: 'Of course, I am dreadfully plain, and I shall never marry. No Prince would want to go and do mighty deeds, unless I could give him a lock of golden hair; and mine, as you know, alas! is mouse-colored and rather thin. And yet inside my heart I want most dreadfully to be loved.'

Godetia blushed a little here; because, of course, it is unusual to speak to one's parents in this personal way. But she went on: 'Now the only creatures in the whole world who do not seem to mind my being so ugly are babies. They will come to me even from their mothers.'

Here the Queen interrupted, as mothers often do, to say: 'Oh! While I think of it, did you wash your throat with permanganate of potash, Godetia, after I saw you kissing the baby of the tenth under-gardener? I wish you wouldn't.'

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‘Wouldn’t what, Mother?’ Godetia said, politely.

By this time the Queen had forgotten what she had said, so she remarked simply: ‘Go on.’ And Godetia went on.

‘I thought, if Father would give me a little money, I would start a sort of Babies’ Home for the poorest of the kingdom, you know; and look after them myself.’

The King said, after a long silence: ‘But I can’t have you starting an orphanage here. It wouldn’t do at all. Just think, if your mother and I met you in the street, and you were wheeling a push-cart with several babies, it would look so bad to go on, and equally bad to stop and speak.’

Godetia said earnestly: ‘Oh! But I could go to another kingdom, Father; and take a new name, or — or anything.’

So in the end the King could say nothing. He gave Godetia the money; and she went away to a kingdom far beyond her own land, and there she started a Babies’ Home.

And soon Godetia forgot her ugliness and almost everything else. She had crowds of babies to look after — all the little, ailing, weakly, lost, or lonely babies in the land; and they loved her dearly. Of course, she had a few people to help her; but every day she loved all the babies; and, however thin and ill and neglected they were at first, they grew strong and well and loving. And Princess Godetia was happy. She was ever so happy.

The Robe of Princess Godetia

All her long life she cared for the babies. She knew all about them. She understood their language. But there was one thing which even she did not know. She did not know what babies do when they fall asleep. And this story now goes on to tell what the babies did.

The moment they fell asleep, the real laughing babies jumped out of their little resting bodies and ran to their Truly Home beyond the kingdoms of the earth. Along the flowery lanes, up the green hills they ran, till they came to the House of the Mother; and there they went in at the door. And in the House of the Mother they went to little cupboards; they reached their tiny hands; and some took out pearls, and some took out strands of silk. And they ran to where the Mother was sitting, sewing beautiful garments. They gave her the pearls; and she said: 'The pearls are the tears of babies on earth, chased away by the dear kind one.'

And the babies sang: 'The Princess Godetia.'

And they gave the Mother handfuls of soft shining silk; and she said: 'The silk is the laughter of the babies on earth, which the dear kind one made to come.'

And the babies sang: 'The Princess Godetia.'

When they had done this many times, a streak of bright sunlight came through the window; and the Mother cried: 'Go! Go!'

And the babies sang: 'To Princess Godetia.'

And they ran and ran, down the green hills, along

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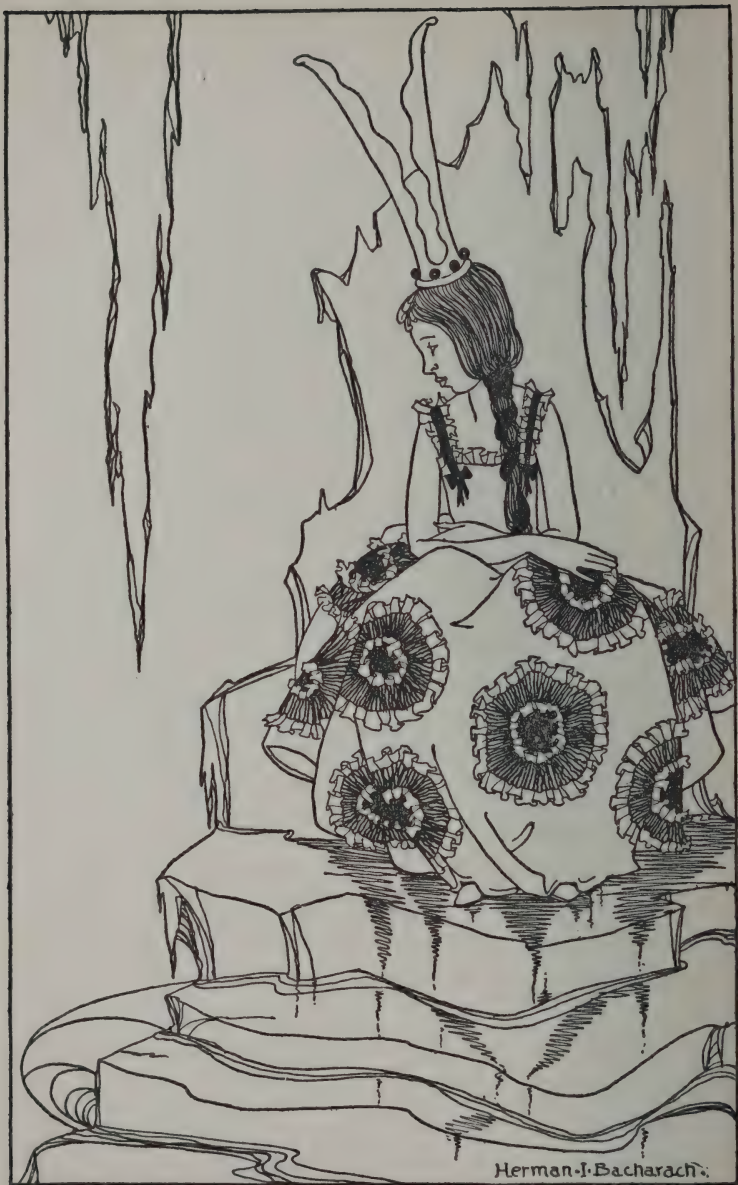
the flowery lanes, till they came to earth, and woke up in their cribs, and crowed for Princess Godetia to come to them.

When she was very old, the plain Princess died. She went, smiling a little sadly, to the Land of the Mothers. At the gate of that Land thousands of babies met her, and they dragged her by their little pink hands to the House where the Mother of all waited with a garment of chased tears and laughter; and it gleamed soft and sheeny in her white hands.

All the babies sang: 'For the Princess — our dear one — Godetia.'

But Godetia hung back.

The Mother said: 'Come, dear one.' And upon Godetia she placed the robe of babies' tears and laughter; and suddenly Godetia knew that her ugliness had become beauty there. And she laughed with happy laughter; and she and the Mother played with the babies under the shady trees; and in the distance they heard other mothers — singing.





THE ICE-BOUND HEART

ONCE upon a time there were two boys whose names were Hilary and Michael. They were the sons of a not very wealthy Prince. But, although the Prince was not wealthy, he was happy. Indeed, he and the Princess made the very best of things. As the Princess said: 'It is much more jolly to buy things "greatly reduced" at the "Sales" than to have so much that there is no fun in buying anything.' The two boys had green tin money-boxes; and they occasionally saved gold ten-dollar pieces and other trifles sent to them by rich uncles, who never sent quite as much as might have been expected.

The story begins when the boys were ten and eleven.

One day Michael said: 'I say, Hilary; let's stop kissing Father and Mother good-night.'

'Why?' asked Hilary.

Michael answered: 'Great fellows like us don't do it. It's silly. And I'm not going to.'

'I shall,' said Hilary. 'I like kissing people who belong to me. It's a sort of sign that you really do belong.'

'You're a great kiss-mammy baby,' sneered Michael. And Hilary blushed a little.

That night they were playing a game of halma before going to bed. They didn't much like halma,

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which is a ridiculous ancient royal game; but parents are often queer about games, and prefer what they call 'nice, quiet games' before bed. Presently the Princess looked up from her sewing and said: 'Who has won?'

'Neither. It's a tie,' said Hilary. 'Let's have one more to see who wins.'

The Princess looked at the Prince, and said: 'What does your father say?'

And Father said: 'No! Off you go.'

'Goo'-night,' said Michael in a funny gruff voice; and went out.

'Good-night, Mother,' said Hilary, giving her an extra squeeze. 'Good-night, Father.'

'Good-night, my darling,' said the Princess, holding him suddenly very tight.

'Good-night, Hilary, my boy,' said the Prince. And he, too, seemed to want to keep Hilary a moment or two longer.

And this was the beginning of it all. Afterwards Michael never would kiss his father and mother. Something held him stiff and cold inside. 'Hilary's different,' he would tell himself, when he noticed his mother's sad little look. 'He's just the soft kind of beggar who can be affectionate. I'm not. I'm strong and silent.' And Michael felt very much a hero when he thought of being the strong and silent sort of fellow.

When the two sons were grown up, they had to choose what they would do in the world. And, as is

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The Ice-Bound Heart

usual for the sons of Princes, they had to set forth upon an adventure. This was the adventure.

News reached them that a beautiful Princess was imprisoned in an ice-bound tower. The spell of frost had been cast upon her, so that her heart was frozen. Many knights had tried, but failed, to rescue her. So Michael and Hilary set off to deliver the ice-bound maiden.

After much travel, which I shall not tell you about because descriptions of scenery are so tiresome, they reached the ice-tower. A freezing breath blew upon them; and they shivered. A fear crept over them, too; but they broke their way into the tower, and climbed a thousand slippery steps to the chamber where the maiden was imprisoned.

Then, oh! then, they caught their breath. For, seated on a glittering throne of frosty silver, was the loveliest maiden they had ever dreamed of.

Hilary burst forth into a torrent of words, and besought the maiden to trust herself to him. But her blue eyes froze him, and she looked coldly away.

Then Michael, slowly and with difficult speech, besought the maiden; and he was as near feeling deep things as he'd ever been. But the words wouldn't come. He couldn't say 'Dearest maiden,' or 'Beloved of my Heart,' because he thought it silly. And, with a look cold and terribly sad, the maiden turned her head. Nothing could melt the hardness of her frozen heart. And Michael turned to go.

At that moment something happened. Hilary

The Enchanted Children

could no longer bear to see such lovely, cold hardness. He felt it terrible that one so young and fair should have so sad a fate. His own heart throbbed and suffered; and he hid his face in his hands and cried great hot tears. And, as he wept, the tears fell on the still, little, white hands of the maiden; and the hands moved and grew warm. And then, as the tears fell, a great change came into the maiden's eyes. The cold went; and they glowed like stars; and the faint color of apple-blossoms stirred in her cheeks. And she stood and cried: 'Hilary, my knight, the spell is broken. My heart is melted. Look in my face. Your tears have broken the spell.'

Of course, Hilary and the maiden were married the same afternoon, and set off for home.

Michael, feeling cold and bitter, traveled a different way. And as he went he blamed the bad spirits for robbing him of the power to feel things and show his feelings so that others could see. He quite forgot that he had begun it himself. But he soon got over the worst of his trouble; and he married a girl with heaps of money and what is called a 'pleasant face.'

One evening a few years later, the father and mother of Hilary and Michael were sitting by the palace fire. They had just returned home from visiting their two sons. They had stayed first in Michael's house, and then in Hilary's. And the Princess looked up from her sewing, and said: 'Father, I wonder why it is so dull at Michael's and so happy at Hilary's. Michael seems so old; but Hilary seems just the same

The Ice-Bound Heart

as he used to be. I wonder if Michael caught a cold when he went to that ice-tower, and never really recovered.'

'It began long before that,' said the Prince. 'Don't you remember that night after the game of halma, when for the first time in his life he didn't kiss us good-night?'

'I wish I could forget that,' said the Princess. Then she added; 'Michael is making a lot of money.'

'Much good that will do him,' grunted the Prince.





THE PRINCE'S MYSTERY

THERE was once upon a time a little Prince born in a castle of the moated and towering kind pictured in ancient romance.

A great fuss was made at the christening of the Prince, because he was the first in all the land. Everybody was most excited. Invitations on bright green cards, lettered in pale magenta, were sent even to the poorest relations. And everybody came. The Prince was called twenty-eight names after a few of his ancestors and his fourteen living uncles. So everybody was pleased.

The next day the King and Queen felt a little overdone. And the Queen said: 'How tiring relations are, Father!'

The King was a little touchy, and said crossly: 'Well, my dear, your family is so extraordinarily garrulous.'

The Queen raised her proud head, and said coldly to the maid-in-waiting: 'Emma, bring me the red morocco-bound dictionary.' And she took the dictionary and began to search for the word 'garrulous.' She had only got as far as 'gab-,' and was tired, when the royal express messenger appeared with a curious parcel on a golden salver. He brought the parcel to the King, who said to the Queen: 'Look!'

'Whatever is it?' said the Queen.

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With a wave of his hand the King dismissed the lords and ladies-in-waiting; then he began to open the parcel. He tore off many wrappings, and at last revealed a sealed box. On the lid of the box was written:

This gift is from an unbidden guest who bears no grudge. It contains the Prince's worst enemy. Many battles must he fight with his enemy before he gains peace and happiness.

And in smaller writing were instructions that the box was to be taken to the deepest dungeon of the castle, and there opened by one who was an entire stranger, and who would never speak again about the mystery.

‘How silly!’ cried the Queen.

‘How inconceivably and preëminently irregular,’ said the King. But he hastily added: ‘I beg your pardon, my dearest’; for the Queen was making a dart to the dictionary.

An entire stranger was summoned; and he took the gift to the deepest dungeon, and promised, upon peril of his life, to keep the secret of what or who the enemy was.

‘It cannot be very big,’ said the Queen.

‘Snakes are often small, venomous, and deadly,’ snapped the King. Whereupon the Queen fainted; and everybody forgot about the enemy in the dungeon.

The Prince grew in beauty and strength. Never was a country more proud of its future king. ‘Of course, he has his faults,’ remarked the Queen; but

The Prince's Mystery

she didn't believe it all the same. And surprisingly quickly the Prince came of age. There was a great party, a public holiday, birthday bonuses, and general rejoicing.

It was when the excitement of the twenty-first birthday party had died down a little that the Prince was told of his greatest enemy. He listened in wonder, his blue eyes cloudy with anger sometimes and at other times sparkling with courage.

'I will challenge him and meet him to-morrow,' he cried.

'Brave boy!' sobbed the Queen.

'Your mother,' said the King, 'is suffering from a temporary reaction caused by the natal festivities.' And the Queen dried her eyes, and hunted in the dictionary with fine fury.

The next day, however, the Prince felt very disinclined to meet his enemy. It was a sunny day, and he went for a bathe. By the river's brink he saw walking a most lovely maiden. His heart bounded. As you may guess, it was now time for him to choose a Princess. The maiden was the most beautiful he had ever seen. She was not at all the pink and stupid kind of maiden who often appears in a story like this. She was sun-browned, and wore a rather old, brown dress. Round her head she had a twisted wreath of wild flowers. Her eyes held laughter; and her mouth was fairly large and very firm. The Prince could not see her mouth at the moment of meeting her; for she was eating a large apple.

The Enchanted Children

Without more ado, the Prince asked her to be his wife. She immediately consented; told him that she was a poor orphan; and together they went at once to the King.

‘Nothing would please me better,’ said the King. ‘But I cannot give my permission for the marriage to take place until my son has challenged his worst enemy.’

‘I will attend to the matter this moment,’ said the Prince. And, with a brave step, he went alone to the dungeon.

The dungeon was cold and dark. A little gleam of light straggled through a barred window near the roof. The Prince pulled himself together, and advanced full of fight.

And then he saw, advancing also, a creature of most threatening looks; crouching it came, full of fight. The Prince gave a yell and flew out of the dungeon.

He was horribly ashamed of his cowardice; but he bravely confessed. The King was furious; the Queen wept on the dictionary; only the maiden, who was to be the Princess, was fearless.

‘Come!’ she said. ‘Let me go, too. I must share all your dangers.’

The Prince said: ‘I must fight my battles alone.’

‘If I can’t share all, I will share nothing,’ cried the Princess-to-be.

So they went together to the dungeon. Cold, damp, and dark it was. They crept forward, hand in hand.

The Prince's Mystery

There seemed to be a growing shadow moving in a faint gleam of light. Closer they went, and closer. Suddenly the maiden burst into laughter, and the Prince gave a gasp of surprise. In front of them, so placed that only the Prince could see himself in it, was a *mirror*.

‘Your worst enemy!’ said the Princess-to-be.

‘But two to face it,’ said the Prince.

And they kissed one another there in the dungeon. And soon they were married. And they went through life together; sometimes happily; sometimes sadly; but always bravely, ever after.





THE LITTLE KNIGHT

THERE was once a Mother who had four darling sons. And in the land where they dwelt, boys became knights as soon as they were old enough; and they rode off to defend the land of their birth and rid it of evil dragons. And so it was that the three eldest sons of the Mother, all in due time, buckled on their armor and rode away. The Mother knew they must go; but she was sad, and tears ran down her soft cheeks when the time came for them to leave her. Perhaps this was why she dearly, dearly loved the last little boy, who was too young to be a knight and ride away. Perhaps this was why she wished that he might never grow any older than seven. For seven was his age at the time of my story.

Now the little boy — the youngest and littlest of all — was unhappy to be at home alone. He wanted to ride away also. ‘Mother,’ he would say seven times a day, ‘buckle on my armor, too. I am big and brave enough. I want to go.’

‘There is no armor small enough for so young a knight,’ the Mother would reply; and then, like as not, she would take him in her arms and hold him tight. The little knight did not like this at all; and he would wriggle out of those strong warm arms, and kick his feet in great discontent.

‘Be my knight at home,’ the Mother would say. ‘There is so much to do.’

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'It isn't a knightly thing to feed chickens, and fetch eggs, and stir the boiling jam,' the boy would grumble.

And he grew so tired and discontented that at last the Mother said with a sigh: 'Very well, little knight. Saddle your pony — for you cannot ride a charger — and I will buckle on such armor as will fit you.'

Joyfully, joyfully then ran the little knight to the stable. 'Shoo! Shoo!' he cried to the hens and chickens. 'I am leaving you. I am going to ride away.'

'Cluck! Cluck!' cried the hens sadly. For they knew how Mothers feel when the littlest grows suddenly big and important, and goes away.

The small rough pony fretted to be gone; and the little boy leapt into the saddle.

'Good-bye!' he cried. 'I will come back with treasure; but I shall be a long time gone.'

'Good-bye! Oh, good-bye!' said the Mother. 'Come back soon, my little son.' And the tears chased each other brightly, quickly down her soft cheeks.

'Off!' shouted the little knight; and the pony started.

'How queer Mothers are,' said the boy to himself. 'When one is brave and strong enough to fight for them, they cry. It is very strange, indeed.'

But he soon forgot about the tears. For the sky was blue; and the wind swayed the trees of the forest. The little pony galloped well for three miles along the highway. And then, a great and fearsome beast rushed suddenly out of the forest. He was not seeking

The Little Knight

prey. He disappeared quickly among the trees. But the pony had not been this way before; and he was only used to quiet fields and farms. He jumped madly and kicked. Out of the saddle he tossed the little knight. He tossed him into a stony, thorny ditch. Round turned the pony, and home, home, he galloped, his bridle hanging loose upon his neck.

Sore and scratched, the little knight picked himself up. There was a rustle in the bushes. A great snake reared its head, and its bright eyes snapped and glittered. But it glided away, as if so small a knight with broken armor was not worth taking notice of. Then the little boy, who was a knight, saw that the fall had cut his knee. Such a bad cut. It hurt and bled. His handkerchief was no use. He was a brave little knight; but he was hurt and bleeding; and it was no wonder he cried. And there were three long miles to limp home.

Painful was the limp of the little knight. Long were the miles on the highway. And he was feeling that he could go no farther. Then in the distance he saw somebody. Swiftly, swiftly came the feet over the highway; and the little knight saw that it was his Mother. Her eyes were alight; and her bright hair was blowing loose in the wind. She ran a little way now and then, and held out her arms. And the little boy saw that she had neither hat for shelter from the sun nor sword for defense.

When she was quite close, she gave a little cry; and took the boy with the bleeding knee up in her arms;

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and turned toward home. And as he told her of all that had happened, she gave little sudden laughs of great happiness; and she held him closer still.

And so the little knight, who had ridden forth so bravely, came back in his Mother's arms. He felt ashamed, and could not understand why the Mother was so happy, why she laughed so gayly and almost danced along the highway.

When they reached home, the little pony was safe in the stable.

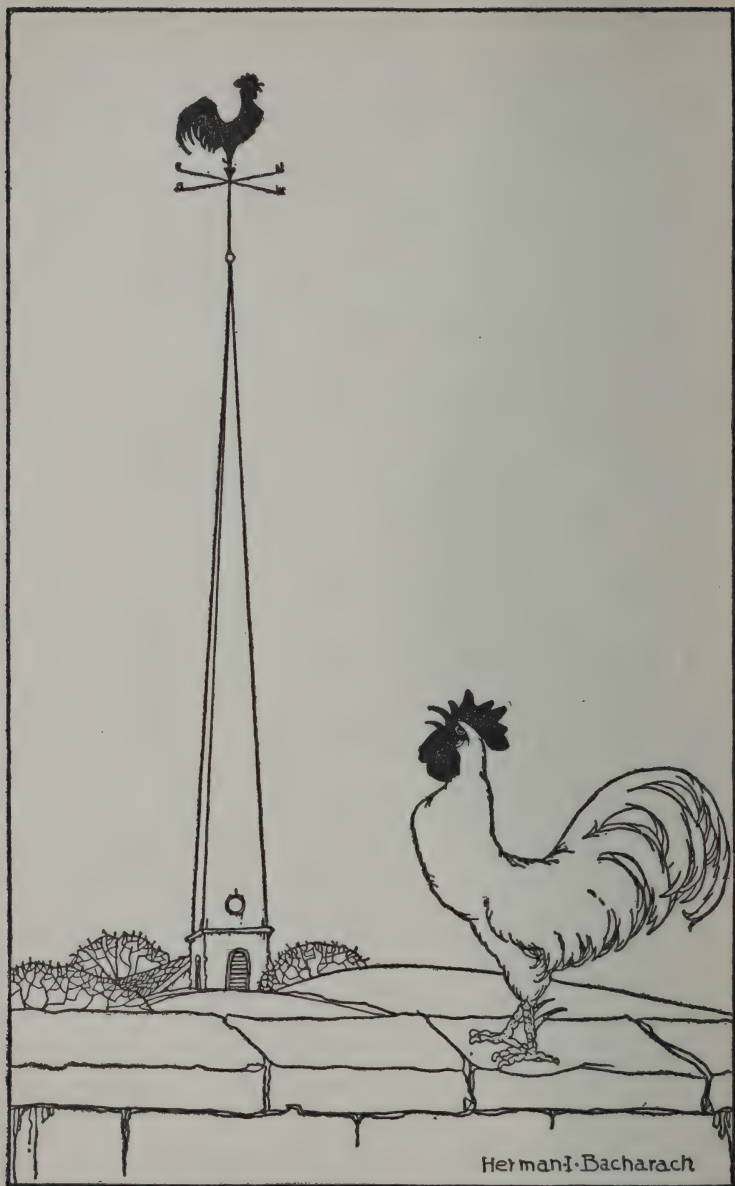
'Cluck! Cluck!' cried the hens, happily. For they knew how Mothers feel when the littlest and lost chick is found.

In the house the Mother bathed and bound the little knight's knee.

'I can't go again for a long, long time,' sighed the little knight.

'That will be lovely for me,' laughed the Mother.

'How queer Mothers are,' said the little knight to himself. 'When one is brave and strong enough to fight for them, they cry. And when one comes home wounded and hurt and feeling a great stupid, they laugh and sing for joy. It is very strange, indeed.'





THE WEATHERCOCK

THERE was in a certain place a white church. It had a spire which tapered up into the blue sky. Standing proudly upon the point of the spire was a golden weathercock. Shooting out at four sides were the letters N. E. S. W. And when the north wind blew, round swung the weathercock and turned his bright, unblinking eyes to the north. And when the south wind blew, the weathercock swerved round to the south, and his golden breast gleamed. So to the east or the west. Very high and grand was the golden weathercock on the tapering church spire.

Down below the church lay a large farmyard. The cowsheds had red roofs, and the barns were full of sweet-smelling hay. Fat white and speckled hens, with their yellow children, lived in the farmyard. Brown ducks waddled; and turkeys strutted. But the noisest creature in the farmyard was the cock. He was little and swift to run; and he had a mighty crow. He crowed before dawn; and his shrill, clear voice stirred the deepest sleepers to rise. He was a cheery and agreeable little cock, and was much respected in the farmyard.

But one day, standing at sunrise on the farmyard wall, our little cock, crowing, raised his beady eyes to the sky; and far up — up against the faint blue of the sky, all in the early light of the climbing sun —

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he saw the glint of the golden-breasted weathercock. The wind was gentle; and the weathercock stood still and proud; and never a crow did he make. The little farmyard cock ceased crowing. And when the hens and ducks and turkeys woke up, he inquired about the golden cock so high in the sky.

‘Why does he never crow?’ asked the little cock.

‘Too proud,’ gobbled the turkeys.

‘Too grand,’ clucked the hens.

‘Too high up,’ quacked the ducks.

But no one could tell the little cock that the golden bird was not alive, and never had been.

In the little farmyard cock’s heart there grew a great envy of the bird on the spire. ‘If only I could be so,’ he thought. ‘If only I could fly so high as to be a weathercock! What use my crowing in this farmyard? What use my dull brown and green? I might be so high up that all the world could see me.’

And this was the beginning of the discontent of the little cock. This was how he began to think: ‘Perhaps if I stop crowing and stand proud and grand, somebody — a lord mayor or a bishop — will claim me for a weathercock.’ So he crowed less and less. He grew more and more silent and stiff. And terrible things began to happen.

The farmer, not hearing the cock crow, overslept; and his wife overslept; and all the farm men overslept. And the fire was late in being lighted. And the breakfast was late in being cooked. And the cows

The Weathercock

were late in being milked. And the hens were late in laying eggs. And the butter was late for the market. And everybody was cross, and everything was upset. The farmer blamed his wife; his wife blamed the maid; the maid kicked the cat; the cat killed five tiny chicks to pay everybody out. And all the time the little cock, who had caused all the trouble by not crowing, fixed his beady eyes on the silent, proud, golden weathercock. And never a crow did he make.

Then the farmer ordered an alarm-clock. Everybody had been depending on the farmyard cock; and the clockmaker had no alarm-clock in his store. He promised to get one from the neighboring town, and bring it to the farmer the very next day.

The farmer told this to his wife, who said: 'When the clockmaker comes, we must give him a good dinner.'

'Quite right,' said the farmer, 'a good dinner it must be.' And then he was struck by an idea. 'Bless my soul!' he cried. 'We will have a good dinner, missus. I'm blessed if I don't kill that little cock who don't crow; and we'll roast him, and eat him, too.'

So the farmer went out into the farmyard, where the silent cock stood, looking up at the golden weathercock. And as the cock took no notice of the farmer, there was no difficulty in catching him — and next day in eating him, too.

'A fine tender bird,' said the clockmaker, smacking his lips. 'And you'll find the clock very reliable.'

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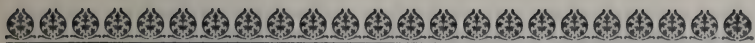
Then he thanked the farmer's wife for the dinner, and went away.

High above the farmyard, high in the darkening sky, the weathercock swung round to the southwest.

'Blowing up rainy, I fancy,' said the farmer, as he shut the farmhouse door.



Herman J. Dacharach



THE GAME

ONCE upon a time there lived five Princes in five kingdoms. They were jolly little Princes; but, of course, they often felt lonely in their separate kingdoms.

In the round open space where the gates of the five kingdoms met, there was the sweetest house you ever saw. In summertime it was hidden in roses and honeysuckle. Among the bushes round the house the bright birds built their nests. In this house lived a Play Angel. In case you don't know what a Play Angel is, I will tell you that this one was just a lovely mother kind of lady, who wore a warm red dress and knew the best games in all the world.

One day, when the five Princes came each to his separate gate and peered at one another through the golden bars, the mother lady came out of her house with the roses, honeysuckle, and bright birds; and she said in a sweet voice: 'Come out. Come out. Let us play all together.'

So the five Princes ran to the gate-keepers; and after a little while they were allowed to go out into the green open space. It took time because their fathers were Kings; and their mothers, the Queens, had to be asked. And it was only when the Queens had decided that the Play Angel was quite respectable that they let the Princes out to play.

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Oh, what games! The Play Angel taught them London Bridge, Oranges and Lemons, Hop-Scotch; and they ran about on the soft grass and laughed to see the bright birds fly out at the noise of their play.

The only sad thing was that the fifth Prince wasn't a sport. He would dance out of step, or trip up the others, or say that he didn't want to take his turn. And, worst of all, he kept on saying: 'Oh! Don't let's play this. I won't play this. I want to play something else.' The others tried not to mind; but you know how horrid it is when one won't play the game.

The loveliest games of all were the real ones. For the mother lady, the Play Angel, found that one Prince could build cities; and one could paint pictures; and one could cook the dinner; and one could plant the garden. Only the fifth Prince would do nothing properly. Splendid bricks were brought for the child who could build cities; and the Play Angel watched him build. The second child painted beautiful pictures to put in the houses of the cities. And the third child cooked the dinners in the houses. And the fourth child dug the gardens and planted fruit trees. They were all as happy as the day was long. Only the fifth child laughed at the houses, and the pictures, and the dinners, and the gardens; and he said they were silly. The Play Angel grew sad at this, and said: 'Little Prince, you will be sorry one day that you did not learn to play the game.'

Many days the Princes played in the green open space. They learned how to build more strongly, and

paint more beautifully, and cook more daintily, and dig and plant better gardens. And they then grew up; and they went out into the big world to find kingdoms for themselves. And at the gate of the big world the mother lady, the Play Angel, watched them go.

‘Good-bye, oh, good-bye,’ she said.

‘Good-bye, oh, good-bye,’ they called. ‘What a game it is to be getting kingdoms for ourselves!’ And they rode away, laughing and singing.

The first Prince went through fire and water and many adventures; and at last he found a kingdom, and also found a most beautiful Princess. The houses in the kingdom he built himself; and everybody cried: ‘Long live our King!’ And they said: ‘Whoever taught our King to build such good houses?’

And the King answered: ‘The Play Angel.’

The second Prince also had many adventures, and he found a kingdom and a Princess. He painted all the pictures for the people, and everybody said: ‘Long live our King! Whoever taught our King to make such beauty?’

And the King answered: ‘The Play Angel.’

The third Prince won his kingdom and his Princess. He cooked banquets for people: and everybody said: ‘Long live our King! Whoever taught our King to cook so well?’

And the King answered: ‘The Play Angel.’

The fourth Prince won his kingdom and his Princess. He showed the people how to dig deep and plant fruitful trees. And everybody said: ‘Long live our

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King! Whoever taught our King to be such a clever gardener?’

And the King answered: ‘The Play Angel.’

The fifth Prince, as you know, could do nothing. When he saw the others set forth on their high adventure to win a kingdom each, he laughed nastily and said: ‘Silly noodles! If you keep your wits, you need never play the game, not even when you’re twenty-one.’

Now the father of the fifth Prince was a hard-working King, who had saved a little money as hard-working Kings usually do. And he often used to say to the Queen: ‘My dear, when we both are sixty, we’ll retire from the kingdom and live near Boston. I’ve set my heart on a small island at Cohasset.’ And the Queen would nod and smile, and forget that she was tired.

But the fifth Prince, who didn’t want to work for a kingdom, came to his father and said: ‘Look here, Dad. Can’t you buy me a decent little kingdom? I’ll make a King all right; and in a jiffy I’ll pay you back the money.’

The King was rather upset and cross about this; but the Queen thought her son was very deserving; and she kept the King awake in bed so long, talking about buying the kingdom, that at last from sheer tiredness he said: ‘All right! All right! Only stop talking and let me go to sleep; and I’ll buy the young pup a kingdom. It means using up all our savings; and we shall never be able to go and live near Boston.’

So the King, the father of the fifth Prince, took all his savings out of the old coffee tin on the palace mantelpiece; and he bought a kingdom for his son. It was a dull sort of place; but the Prince was made King and soon began to make things hum. He sent out orders for all the builders to come to him; and he said: 'Now, then! I want a city. Hurry up and build it. I give you six months to do the work.' Of course, anybody knows you can't build a good city in six months. The end of it was that the houses were badly built. The builders forgot to put stairs in them; so the people couldn't go up to bed. And the roofs were blown off by the gentlest breeze. The people made a great fuss, and the King got into an awful temper. He called together all the painters and all the cooks and all the gardeners. He crammed them all in one place and shouted: 'Hurry up! Paint some pictures; cook some dinners and make some gardens.'

Of course, the pictures made people feel sick. So did the dinners. And the gardens were worse than rubbish heaps. The kingdom fell into a dreadful muddle, and more and more the people hated the King.

At last the people held a great meeting and said: 'Our King doesn't play the game. Let us refuse to do anything more for him.'

So the builders wouldn't build; the cooks wouldn't cook; the painters wouldn't paint; the gardeners wouldn't dig and plant. The King's dinner was not cooked; and he stormed and raved and stamped out

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into the palace kitchen to find the cook. But the cook had gone, and the King couldn't cook by himself; so he went hungry as well as angry. For how can you expect others to play the game when you won't play it yourself?

In the other four kingdoms everything went on happily. In one kingdom the cooks fell ill one day. But the King knew how to cook; and he went and did it; and everybody helped. And all the people cried: 'Long live our King! He plays the game.'

The kingdom of the fifth Prince was a ruin. The people not only hated the King; they hated one another. At last the King decided to run away. He chalked 'TO LET' on a board, and stuck it at the gate of the kingdom. Then he stole away.

Over hill and dale, by long roads and deep rivers, wandered the wretched King. His hair grew very long; his beard thick and untidy; so that he looked a terrible creature. At last on his wanderings he met an old and wise woman; and he told her all his troubles and asked her pity. She said that he must begin all over again; and when the King (who was the fifth Prince, you remember) asked the old woman how he could begin all over again, she waved her hands in front of his face, and he fell into a deep sleep.

It seemed a long, long time he slept; but one sunny golden morning he awoke. His long hair and beard were gone. He was once again a little Prince. He stood by a gate, looking upon a green open space and the sweetest house you ever saw. And there were

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roses and honeysuckle and bright birds. The Prince pressed his little face to the golden bars of the gate. Presently a lovely mother kind of lady came out of the house, and she said: 'What is it, little boy? Who are you, and what do you want?'

And the little Prince said: 'I don't know who I am; but I know I want to play the game. Please do you teach it?'

The mother lady said: 'Oh, yes! I play it with many others. It's such good fun. I'll show you.'

And she opened the gate; and the little Prince ran and put his hand in hers. And he played — but that is another story.





THE RING-DOVE

THERE was once upon a time a little boy whose father and mother were very rich, indeed. And, of course, it happened that the little boy had a great many and expensive toys. Indeed, he had so many that neither he nor you could count them. There was an enormous nursery in the little boy's house, and a rocking-horse as big as a real one; and a real pony, too, in the stable; and a tiny car with a real engine driven by gasoline; and hundreds of other most exciting things.

But, strange to tell, the two things the little boy loved best in all the world were a cart which he had made himself out of a box and two old wheels; and a ring-dove which had flown in at his nursery window in the cold weather and then had never left him.

Very, very early in the morning the dove would sit on the ledge of the open window, and call: 'Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo.' And the little boy would say: 'Oh! You beauty!' and he would sit up in bed, all bright and flushed with sleep.

The cook in her room would say: 'That wretched bird!' And the sleepy stable boy would say: 'If I could only get hold of that there bird's neck!' The little boy's mother would say, dreamily: 'It's like sleeping in the woods.' 'A bit too much like it,' the little boy's father would say, gruntishly.

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But in spite of this they all loved the ring-dove, except in the very early morning. Everywhere the little boy went, the ring-dove would go, too, perched on his shoulder and pushing its soft gray head into the little boy's warm pink neck.

And then one morning there was no longer any call: 'Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo.'

The little boy blinked sleepily, and jumped out of bed, and pattered to the window. There on the ground below, his feathers rumpled, lay the ring-dove. Very quickly the little boy aroused the house. Everybody flew down; and they lifted the little ruffled dove. He was dead. His head hung limply and his bright eyes were closed. Nobody knew how it had happened; and the little boy cried till he could cry no more.

Later in that sad day, he and his mother dug a tiny grave in the meadow; and there they buried the ring-dove.

'I shall never be happy again,' sobbed the little boy; and he hid his face in his mother's arm.

'Oh! But you will, you will,' said his mother. 'Only wait a little while.'

The little boy could not understand this; but, of course, he waited.

All the long summer the little boy remembered the 'Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo' of his dead ring-dove. But he never went near the meadow with the little grave. He could not bear to do that.

Until the autumn. And then one afternoon his

The Ring-Dove

mother took him. There was a little wind blowing; and they went across the meadow hand in hand.

Yes. There was the little grave; but oh! such a wonder. All atop of it blew pale flowers. Nobody had planted them; but there they were. Everywhere, everywhere, blowing in the little wind, flowery bells on slender green stalks. Such fragile, delicate things.

‘Just listen,’ whispered the mother; and the little boy knelt down and put his ear close.

Tinkle! Tinkle! Tinkle! Tinkle! The silverest, sweetest music. The little wind shook the flowering bells.

Tinkle! Tinkle! Sure enough the little boy could hear it. His eyes shone.

‘Mother,’ he said, ‘I don’t know why; but it gives me the same sort of lovely feeling that ‘Coo-Coo-Coo’ used to give me — sort of happy.’

‘It’s the same voice,’ said his mother.

‘But it can’t be. Coo-Coo is dead, dead long ago.’

‘The kind earth took Coo-Coo’s body and made it sweet and green and blue, and sent his voice into the bells and the wind. See?’

The little boy nodded.

‘Shan’t you die — or I — or father — or anybody, then?’ he asked.

‘Not really die; only change,’ said the mother, softly.

‘Into a flower?’ asked the little boy.

‘No. Into something just like ourselves; only

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more ourselves — stronger, braver, happier, more beautiful, more laughing.'

'Shall I know you and you know me, do you think?' asked the little boy.

'Why, of course,' said his mother, hugging him. 'You recognized Coo-Coo's voice, didn't you? You can't miss knowing anything you've loved very, very much.'

'I see,' said the little boy; and they were very quiet together — the little boy and his mother — listening to Coo-Coo's voice all alive again and more beautiful in the flowering bells and the wind.

Tinkle! Tinkle! Tinkle! Tinkle!





THE GOLDEN BIRD

THERE was once upon a time a poor Princess, from whom everything had been taken except her baby. But, as the baby was the most precious thing she had ever had, she cared little for the loss of her other treasures. Hugging the baby close to her, she fled a long way, until she reached a place where grew a deep and tangled wood by the wide, green sea. Here the Princess found a hut; and in the hut they made their little home — the Princess and the baby.

The baby loved to lie among the flowers just outside the door of the hut. He would reach out his tiny hands to pluck their bright heads; and he would laugh when they swayed and trembled in the wind. So they were very, very happy — the Princess and the baby.

One day the poor and happy Princess had to make a journey to a far village to buy food. So she called the birds and animals to her, and she said: 'Who will look after my baby while I am away?' For she knew that there are the best nurses among the birds who make nests and the bears who guard their own fat, furry babies. That was why she said: 'Who will look after my baby?'

A sea-gull screamed: 'I will! I will! My eyes can see far. I will look after your baby.'

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A rabbit piped: 'I will! I will! My legs can run fast. I will look after your baby.'

An owl hooted: 'I will! I will! I am wise and know a thing or two. I will look after your baby.'

Only a little golden bird, who sat in a bush, said nothing except: 'A little bit of bread and no cheese.' For that is what the golden bird sings all day long; and nobody knows why.

So the poor and happy Princess kissed her baby and left him sleeping among the flowers. The sea-gull hovered over him. The rabbit sat up close beside him. The owl perched near and looked very wise. And all went well, until —

Down in the green sea, the sea-gull saw a fat fish; and he forgot the baby, and dived.

The rabbit saw some friends of his, and scuttled away to play.

The owl went fast asleep, while thinking wisely of all the dreadful things which might happen to the baby.

And at that very moment a cruel robber came through the trees of the wood. He had come to carry off the baby. Poor, poor baby!

Then the little golden bird, who had promised nothing except bread and no cheese, flew right in front of the robber and perched for a moment on his big, frightening foot.

'Ho!' said the robber. 'A golden bird! I'll have it.' And he stooped to seize the golden bird.

But the bright wings quickly flashed; and there was the golden bird a little way off. The robber crept

after him, and again reached out his hand. Off flew the bird again.

‘I’ll have him yet!’ cried the robber, angrily; and he ran. Away flew the golden bird, just a little way each time. And never was he caught. On and on he flew. On and on ran the cruel robber; and he did not notice that he was being led farther and farther into the deep and tangled wood, farther and farther away from the baby.

At last, up, up, up went the golden bird; and flew away home. And the robber was left in the deep, dark wood, and was lost. People say that he wanders there to this day, white-haired and feeble.

When the Princess came back, the baby was awake. He was crowing and stretching out his tiny, pink hands.

‘Precious, precious heart!’ cried the Princess, snatching him up.

‘Who kept my baby so safe?’ said the Princess.

‘I did! I did!’ screamed the sea-gull. ‘My eyes can see far.’

‘I did! I did!’ piped the rabbit. ‘My legs can run fast.’

‘I did! I did!’ hooted the owl. ‘I know a thing or two.’

But the little golden bird in the bush only said: ‘A little bit of bread and no cheese.’

And nobody knew why the baby reached out his tiny hands, and why his blue eyes looked very blue and wise.

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‘Oh! Thank you. Thank you all,’ said the Princess.
And then she said: ‘Bless his heart! How my baby
loves the golden bird!’



Herman I. Bacharach.



THE GREEN MOUNTAINS

THERE was once upon a time a country famed for its strong and fighting men, and for the fearless, mighty Princes who in their turn had ruled over the land. The country lay at the foot of the terrible Green Mountains, which none had ever been able to scale. So high were they that their tops seemed to fade into the sky. So perilous were they that not one of those strong men or fearless Princes had ever ventured far up the steep, dark sides. But, stretching wide at the foot of the Mountains lay the country of the mighty Princes. It had rich pastures and broad rivers; and it bordered the vast and troubled sea.

The people in the country cared little for the trees and flowers and flowing rivers. For they were taught, when very young, to do deeds of strength and daring, against the time when the enemy would come and invade their country. Now and again other Kings and Princes had made battle against that land; but always they had been driven back by hosts of armed men. And, indeed, in other countries, when the little children were foolish and naughty, the elder ones would say: 'Take care now! or the mighty Prince from the land under the Green Mountains will come and carry you off.' And then the little children would creep away; for they were more fearful of that

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mighty Prince than of the most fierce giant ever seen.

Now, when this story begins, there was great rejoicing in the land at the foot of the Green Mountains, because a new Prince had been born — a new Prince to learn the ways of battle; to grow into a fearless warrior; to keep the land of the best fighters and the land of which all the world was afraid.

And the little Prince grew up strong and sound. Each day he was weighed and examined. Each day he was cared for and trained; and quite early he was taught the use of the sword.

But, somehow, he did not make a very good fighter. When it was three o'clock, and time for leaving piano practice and going to battle exercise, the Prince would often be missing. They would search for him; and they would find that he had run straight away from the piano into the gardens, and was lying under a tree with a book or was making a little pond by damming up the stream in the palace gardens. Then he would be dragged off to his battle lesson.

Of course, everybody was most upset about the Prince who did not care for fighting. They knew he could fight when he really liked. For one day he beat the court doctor's stout page-boy, for killing a squirrel. But he would not fight daily and regularly. And, as the father Prince said: 'You never know when you have him. What's the use of a fighter who is not prompt and always *THERE?*'

But the worst came, when, on his tenth birthday,

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the Prince was missing. The time for the morning duel had arrived; and he was nowhere to be seen. The royal servants searched high and low — up trees and down the banks of streams. Nowhere was the Prince to be seen. And not till sunset did they find him. Then, sad enough was the finding. The Prince had set out to climb the Green Mountains. He had climbed only a little way when a sharp pain stabbed his leg just where the knee bends — a horrible, blinding pain. The Prince knew that a hidden hand had wounded him; for a short, sharp knife was buried in his leg. He could only remember pulling out the knife, which hurt most terribly, and putting it in his pocket. Then the Mountains became all misty, and he felt cold — colder than the frost on a white, winter night.

And so they found him. Soon the knee was bound up; and the Prince lay for many weeks unable to walk. Many physicians came to attend him; but none could save the poor leg, which ever afterwards hung too short and limp. And that was, indeed, the end of the fighting Prince. He grew up. He learned how to limp about; but he could never share in battle. And the people became tired of the lame Prince; and the mighty men despised him. ‘A pretty country,’ they scoffed, ‘with a lame Prince for leader!’

When the Prince heard these scoffings, his heart was heavy. He knew that never would the people applaud his bravery, and cry: ‘Long live the Prince!’ He knew how they hated the weak and the lame in

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that country of the strong. But sometimes he sang to himself, so glad was he at the sunshine. Sometimes he told happy stories to the very, very young and the very, very old, who loved him. But when he saw the hard, cold face of his mighty father, he limped away and hid himself. And nobody knew, save the very, very young, and the very, very old, who never tell anything, that each day the Prince drew from a hiding-place, close to his heart, the knife which had made him lame. Each day with the knife he limped away to a place known only to himself. And neither must you know till the end of the story; and that is not yet.

The years went on; and in the land at the foot of the Green Mountains the people cared less and less for the trees and rivers, less and less for sowing and reaping and harvest songs. Always they looked out over the sea for the ships of the enemy, who would one day come to fight them. And their great fear was that the enemy would not come before the mighty father Prince died. They were afraid that they would be left with a lame Prince, who would not lead them in battle.

So the years crept on; and at last the mighty Prince died. With bitter hearts the people buried him in his kingdom at the foot of the Green Mountains, whose tops melted into the sky. And the very next day the sails of the enemy's ships showed clear in the morning sun.

Out went the ships of the land of the lame Prince

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to fight in the blue of the perilous sea. And the fight raged fierce for days and nights; and the lame Prince hid his face and wept when he heard the noise of the battle. And at the end of many days a few battered ships, with broken masts and broken, wounded men, came back. Many women with pale faces met them at the harbor. And all the people cried: 'Soon the enemy will land upon our shores; and we shall be their slaves.'

Then it was that the lame Prince rose. Very proud he looked for all his lameness; very white and fine.

'My people, my people at last,' he said. 'Mine — the very young and the very old; mine — the tired, the beaten, the heart-broken. Oh! my people; see! The enemy shall never make you slaves; for I will keep you free. You shall leave forever this land where you have forgotten how to plough and sow and reap; where you never know the joy of summer or the joy of winter for the fear that has been in your hearts. I have carved a way for you, my tired, my beaten ones; and for you, my still happy young.' And he drew close from to his heart the knife which had made him lame. 'Each day,' he said, 'I have crept to the Green Mountains; each day for thirty years I have with this knife carved step by step a way for your feet to tread to a fair land, where you shall learn to sow and reap in joy; where you shall love and laugh, and fear no foe by day or night. Come! I lead the way.' And he held aloft — oh! white and

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fine he was — the knife of the hidden enemy. And the knife was worn down to the hilt.

Then all the people gave a great, glad cry; and the tears swept into their eyes. They pressed forward — all those tired and wounded people; all those very young and very old. They pressed forward to kiss the poor, lame foot of the Prince. And they followed him. Slowly they climbed the steep and hard way; slowly, step by step, in the way which the Prince had carved with the knife from so close to his heart. And so they passed over the Green Mountains to the land of peace.

And when the enemy landed on the shores of the deserted kingdom, they found only empty dwelling-places. They found only a lonely shore where the white waves thundered and the wild birds cried. They found no harvests in the fields; and only broken ships in the harbor. They marched as far as the foot of the Mountains. ‘Can they have escaped thither?’ some said. But the fiercest ones answered: ‘These Mountains are most perilous and have no pass. No man can cross them, not even the strongest; and these were only wounded men and weeping women, with their children and a lame Prince. How could they climb these Mountains with a lame Prince?’ They looked for foothold on the Mountains; but there was no sign of a way. For the creeping moss and hardy mountain flowers had grown over the footholds which the Prince had made.

So the enemy turned away, and went through the

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silent land; and soon set sail again over the vast and troubled sea. They could not hear over the Green Mountains the singing of those who were fearless and free.





THE MAGIC COFFEE

THERE was once upon a time a King and Queen who found a nice Princess for their son to marry. And, when this story begins, the King and Queen had bidden their son to come into the royal chamber to hear what they had decided.

The King cleared his throat. He was a little nervous because, as he said, 'Children are not what they used to be in our day, my dear; and you never can tell. He may fly off the handle.' (This was a deplorable phrase the King had caught from his son, who understood the American language as well as having a smattering of French and Hebrew.)

The Queen interrupted the King and said, 'She's really quite —'

The King frowned and said, 'My dear, are you or am I speaking?'

'Oh! you, of course, dear,' replied the Queen.

'I say,' said the Prince, 'do get a move on. What have I been doing?'

'Nothing,' said the King; 'nothing at all, my boy. We want you to do it.' He was a little confused, as all fathers are apt to be when commanding their sons. He went on: 'The fact is, we have invited Edwina Adelpha for the week-end, and —'

The Prince groaned. 'That dumb doll!' he remarked. 'Whatever for?'

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‘For you to marry,’ snapped the King.

‘To marry her!’ gasped the Prince. ‘Whatever for?’

‘Is that the only question you know — “whatever for?”’ snarled the King.

Then the Queen began to cry. In her heart she was thinking, ‘This will fetch them both.’ (She thought it in royal language, of course.) But it didn’t.

‘I wouldn’t marry Edwina Adelpha for all the air,’ the Prince said. (He was very keen on flying.) ‘She’s a stodgy, splodgy —’

‘Be quiet!’ thundered the King.

‘All right!’ said the Prince. ‘But you may as well know I’m engaged already, and I’m going to marry Billy.’

The Queen would have fainted, but she did not dare. Fainting had gone out of fashion in royal circles. She stood up and simply exclaimed, ‘Billy! That girl!’

The Prince suddenly became gentle. ‘I love her,’ he said to the Queen. ‘Mother, be nice about it,’ and he put his arm round the Queen.

She gave in immediately. That is, of course, the lovely thing even in royal mothers. But the King didn’t give in. He swore he would disown the Prince.

The Prince said: ‘All right, Pater. I’d just as soon be dismissed. Kinging is no fun these days.’ And then he withdrew from the royal chamber.

The King was angry for three weeks. At the end of that time the Queen had worn down his opposition

sufficiently to invite Billy for the week-end. It was a terrible week-end for both the King and Queen. Billy was most charming, but not in a proper royal way. She had hair of gold, but it was short and flopped about her pretty ears.

‘You must let it grow again, dear,’ said the Queen, gently but firmly.

‘Oh! I couldn’t!’ said Billy. ‘Such a nuisance!’

‘But no royal person has ever had short hair,’ said the Queen. ‘It is only done in circles less exclusive.’

‘Well, I’ll be the first Princess to do it,’ said Billy cheerfully.

The Queen said: ‘And your clothes, dear child. Now that we are being so frank. . . . They are not sufficiently moulded to the figure. The waist-line . . .’

‘We don’t have waist-lines now,’ said Billy. ‘That’s frumpish, you know.’

‘All my family have had waists,’ said the Queen stiffly.

‘I know,’ said Billy; ‘but I haven’t got one. What would be the use of building my dress upon a lie?’

‘Oh dear!’ cried the Queen. ‘You young people do argue so. And you use such unroyal language.’

‘I needn’t,’ said Billy, ‘if you’ll be sensible and sweet and let Himself and me be happy and make a hash of our lives in just the way we want.’

Then the Queen gave in once more — not because she wished to, but because, as she said to the King, ‘How can one be dignified when they talk of hashes — a low kind of food unknown in palaces?’

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The King said: 'It's all this freedom, that's what it is. We ought to have been stricter from the beginning.'

And so it came to pass. They were married. The wedding — so the royal household said — was a disgrace. The Prince wore an orange Harris tweed, and the Princess wore a moss-green leather suit. They went for a honeymoon in an aeroplane.

The Prince and Princess were wildly happy. Never were eyes so blue as Princess Billy's, and never heart so brave as Prince Himself's. They told each other five hundred and seven times during the honeymoon that they were as different from everybody else as chalk from cheese. They felt gloriously happy and valiant, as indeed they were. And the days passed, and by and by they came home to their palace. It was a very small palace, which the Princess managed only fairly well. Some days she put her whole heart into the managing, and then some days she forgot it. Sometimes there were meals, and sometimes there were not. Several times the Prince found that he hadn't a single sock out of his three hundred pairs (wedding presents) without a hole. This made him a little cool. He would say:

'Look here, Billy, I think you might mend —'

'Why?' said Billy.

'Well, all wives have a mending day, don't they?' would say the Prince. 'I remember that Mother —'

'Oh! oh! oh!' would cry Billy, putting her fingers in her ears. 'Quick! Take that back! Eat your

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words, quick! You promised you would never say that.'

'All right,' would laugh the Prince, and he would pretend to munch, munch, until he had eaten all his words.

But one day he wouldn't munch, and he wouldn't eat his words. He said that he would like things to be more orderly.

'Very well,' said Billy. 'Have your own mending day. You might make it Wednesday. I shall love to see you mending on Wednesdays.'

Then the Prince stumped out and slammed the door. He said to himself that he wished he had married an entirely different Princess, and he knew his life was ruined. They made up the quarrel in eight minutes, because Billy ran after him to say she was sorry, and he might have been killed if he had gone anywhere and she hadn't said she was sorry, and then she'd be sorry forever and ever.

But it happened again when Billy forgot to order bread and eggs, and there was only a tin of sardines for supper. And then again. And the quarrels lasted eight, fifteen, sixty, three hundred minutes, and longer and longer.

At last the Prince went to a magician. The magician said, 'You wish to make the Princess neat and orderly, and to do the things she ought to do, and none of the things she ought not to do.'

'You understand exactly,' replied the Prince.

The magician said, 'How much love have you?'

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The Prince said, 'Enough to last forever.'

'How strong is it?' asked the magician.

The Prince said, 'Stronger than wealth.'

'Is it as strong as life?' asked the magician.

'Here it is,' said the Prince, and he gave the magician his love to look at.

'Pretty good,' said the magician. 'If you will allow me, I will now grind it to powder, and you will put it in the Princess's coffee, and she'll change in a night, and be all that your selfishness — excuse me, your love — requires.' So he ground the Prince's love to a powder, and the Prince put it in the Princess's coffee. And she changed in a night, even as the magician had said.

In the morning the Princess got up very early and began to work like a furious vacuum cleaner. The Prince said, 'I say, look at this picture in "The Daily Guess."'

'I can't now,' answered the Princess. 'I must clear up all this muddle.'

Breakfast was perfect — such excellent coffee. But the Princess, after inquiring anxiously about it, hurried through the meal, for she had a great deal to do.

'Let's go and gather some lilies by the river,' said the Prince.

'You go, dear,' replied the Princess. 'I must mend these miles and miles of stockings.'

And so it went on. All the mischief went out of the blue eyes of the Princess, and she never said any-

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thing odd or laughable. She took to wearing a new kind of dress, quiet gray or navy blue, and, worst of all, she started to let her hair grow, and when it became untidy she covered it with a net.

The Queen said, 'What an improvement! It only shows what tact can do.'

'Umph!' said the King. 'I'd just got used to her as she was. I hate these chops and changes.'

All the funny, unaccountable things were never done any more by Princess Billy. There was no time to play or poke fun. All the Prince's socks were in a neat row. He hated them.

At last he went again to the magician and said: 'Here! Can't you do something? I was wrong when I wanted the Princess changed.'

The magician said, 'But you gave your love to change her.'

'But now I'll give my life to change her back again,' cried the Prince. And he took himself — his hopes and fears and fads and wishes and selfishness and bravery and loving-kindness and strength — and gave it all to the magician, who ground it up into a powder. And the Prince put this powder in the coffee. And the Princess changed in a night.

She woke up and blinked in the sunlight. She shook the Prince and said, 'Hurry! Hurry! Let's race to the bottom of the garden. Let's climb the pear-tree and smell the morning.'

The Prince flew. And that was only the beginning. In the evening the Prince and Princess sat on the

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grass under the pear-tree. Her hair was cropped again, and her dress was of violent blue.

‘My dear,’ said the Princess, ‘I’ve tried so hard to be neat and good, and I’m so tired; and when I was doing it, I did it because I knew you’d love me to. But I felt just as if I darned you up into one of your socks. I can’t keep it up.’

Then the Prince put his arm round the Princess and said, ‘Precious heart, I’ve been an ass. I tried to change you to please myself. Now I’m going to change myself to please you.’

‘Is it a riddle?’ said the Princess.

‘It is not,’ said the Prince.

‘Then please don’t change. I like you the way you are,’ said the Princess.

Then the Prince said to her: ‘Repeat this very slowly after me —

Common sense is good to have,
But never let it master you,
For then it might deprive you of
The foolish things it’s fun to do.’

‘How jolly!’ cried the Princess. ‘Who said it first?’

“‘The Cheerful Cherub,” who lives in America,’ replied the Prince.

‘Now say something after me,’ said the Princess. ‘Say, “It’s better to be unhappy sometimes than dull all the time.”’

And the Prince said it. ‘How jolly!’ he cried. ‘Who said it first?’

‘I did,’ replied the Princess.

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